



APPARELLED IN RED

THE HISTORY OF THE
RED MAIDS' SCHOOL

Jean Vanes

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Frontispiece The old school in Denmark Street, 1659–1842, said to have been painted by one of the Mistresses

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OF THE
RED MAIDS' SCHOOL

JEAN VANES.

Let us now praise famous men . . .

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Jean Vanes and the Governors of The Red Maids' School
1984, 1992, 2014

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Elisabeth Cook and the Governors of The Red Maids' School
1992 and 2014

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Acknowledgements to the first edition

My sincere thanks are due to the Governors of the Red Maids' School for the help and support I have received from them during the preparation and the writing of this book. I am also much indebted to the Staff of the Trustees of the Bristol Municipal Charities and particularly to the Assistant Clerk to the Governors, Mr. Northway, who has helped me with advice and encouragement at every stage.

I am indebted also to the Staff of the Bristol Record Office where the documents from 1600 to 1836 are held and especially to the Archivist, Miss Mary Williams. To the Staffs of the Avon County Library in Bristol, the University of London Institute of Education and Institute of Historical Research, the Staffs of the British Library and the Public Record Office I record my grateful thanks for their patience and courtesy.

So many old girls of the school have written to me that it is impossible to mention them all, but every letter, every description of events and experiences has been read with interest, often with delight, and has been used in building up the picture of the school in the present century. My debt to them will be obvious to anyone who reads this book.

The present Head Mistress, Miss Castle and her Staff have welcomed me into the school and it was her predecessor, Miss Dakin who first encouraged me to start the research which produced this book. Finally, to Miss Walpole, who taught me to enjoy the study of history and who has allowed me to use all her reports and notes, particularly her account of the school in war-time, I owe a special debt of gratitude and affection.

Foreword

by Elisabeth J. Cook

By 1991 it was time for a second printing of *Apparelled in Red*, but the Headmistress and Governing Body were anxious to make known as widely as possible the considerable improvements which they had managed to bring about during the intervening seven years since the first impression of the book.

Sadly, its author, Dr. Jean Vanes, was prevented by ill health from undertaking the continuation of the Red Maids' story. Nevertheless, she kindly consented to its being taken up by someone else.

I was invited, as another former Red Maid, to carry on the narrative from 1984 where Dr. Vanes had ended, specifically to describe and explain the material and educational changes which had occurred since then.

I hope that the details given in Chapter VII will be of general interest, as well as a means of satisfying the curiosity of Old Girls about the rising in Westbury Road of a sumptuously-appointed academy from the metaphorical ashes of the spartan and impecunious institution whose memory, with fond shudders, we revere.

I am grateful to Mrs. Chermiside for her help in making freely available all the relevant records and correspondence. Miss Hampton gave generous support and advice, but it was her secretary, Mrs. Kingston, who wrestled with my scripts.

To Dr. Vanes I can say only that I wish I could have matched her scholarly and absorbing writing. I am honoured to be associated with a book I admired and enjoyed from the first.

CHAPTER I

The Foundation.

At a meeting of the Bristol Common Council on 16 September, 1634, the retiring Mayor, Matthew Warren, and the Aldermen decided to set up a small committee of the Mayor elect, Andrew Charlton, and five of the Aldermen, 'to consider of a meet woman with twelve young girles to be setled for a beginning in the new Hospitall of Mr. Alderman Whitson's guifte. The same to be setled and the woman and girles to be put in by the midle of October next at farthest.'¹ That Autumn, Nicholas Meredith, the Chamberlain, copied into his account book a series of highly unusual entries. Among the normal payments to officials for their duties and to craftsmen for repairs to town property, there appears the purchase for a shilling of 'a lookeinge glasse for the Children in the Mayden hospitall.' In the same week, the chamberlain paid 'Goodwife Green' (more often called Mistress Greenwell) the Matron of the Hospital, £4 4s. 0d. 'by order of Master Mayor, for diatt of the poore maides there' until Christmas 1634.² The smith and the carpenter had been at work, preparing the house for occupation and the pump in the yard had been repaired. Bedding, blankets and rugs were purchased and flocks to fill the beds. It seems there were only six beds for the twelve girls, but this was quite usual and was sometimes recommended in expensive eighteenth-century seminaries as the best way of keeping the girls warm at night. Twelve shillings was paid for ropes to cord the beds and Mistress Greenwell had made sheets, towels and smocks 'for the poore maids in Mr. Whitson, his hospital.'³

Various iron implements from Greenwell, the smith, cost £7 6s. 6d. and 'a frieng panne, a dripping panne, leather jacks, new barges and tubs, platters, bowls, trays and other necessarie utensills for the saide maiden hospitall' were purchased at a cost of £2 9s. 0d. Locks, keys and window bars cost 10s. 0d.⁴ At first, the Matron was paid £2 5s. 0d. for each girl for the year but, after two years, the allowance was raised to £3 a year, paid quarterly, 'the City allowance for the maintenance of xij girls that are there.'⁵

Occasionally, there were payments to tradesmen for goods or repairs or to 'Goodwife Greenwell of the Maids' Hospital for necessaries laide out by her for the children.'⁶ In the Spring of 1640, Goodwife Greenwell died and

the Chamberlain gave the Mayor £2 to send to the Hospital 'towards relief of the children until a mistress be settled and further order taken.' Very soon, John Greenwell, her husband, moved out, leaving provisions for the girls for which he was paid £1 8s. 5d. Elizabeth Baylie was then appointed mistress, with the payment of £9 a quarter from the City Chamberlain for the twelve girls as before.⁷ 'Mr. Whitson, his Hospitall' was securely established and has continued to be a part of the life of the City of Bristol to this day.

John Whitson, the founder of this hospital of Red Maids, was born at Clearwell in the Forest of Dean, probably in 1557, since he gave his age as thirty-one in January, 1589.⁸ Some time before 1570, his father, William Whitson, left the Forest and moved to Bristol, as had the families of Smythe, Winter, Shipman and many others before him. Whitson's writings, particularly *The Pious Meditation*,⁹ show that he had a good classical education, either at the well-established grammar school at Newland, a few miles from Clearwell, or possibly at the Redcliffe School in Bristol, both of which were remembered in his will. John Aubrey, who was his godson and step-grandson and who included a short biography of Whitson in his *Brief Lives*, says that Whitson went to school in Bristol where he acquired 'a good proficience in the Latin tongue.'¹⁰ Perhaps Whitson was lucky to be receiving his education in the 1560s. A study of literacy suggests that this was a period of rapid improvement which 'experienced a significant upsurge in its ability to read and write.'¹¹ Certainly, his writing is clear and accurate, with a wealth of the classical allusions so dear to his contemporaries.

His formal education completed, his father apprenticed him, on 29 September, 1570, to Nicholas Cutt, merchant of Bristol, and Bridget, his wife, for eight years.¹² Nicholas was the fifth son of John Cutt, a Bristol merchant, who, after his apprenticeship with William Sprat, where Hugh Tipton, later the Consul of the English in Seville, was one of his contemporaries, married, and bought John Smythe's old house in Corn Street.¹³ There, his own apprentices, with whom the young Nicholas was brought up, included William Willy, son of the Chamberlain of Bristol; John Frampton, later author of several books on navigation, and John Bisse, who married Anne Cutt and became a Spanish merchant and known in the town for his proficiency in the Spanish tongue. It was a highly literate background. Nicholas Cutt, after his early years in this lively household, was apprenticed to Robert Smythe, received his freedom on 18 August,

1568, and married Bridget, the daughter of Alderman Saxey, the following year.¹⁴ John Cutt settled on them some property in St. Nicholas Street where Nicholas set up as a wine merchant and it was there that William Whitson brought his son, John, to be apprenticed and there that John spent the next eight years, learning his trade.¹⁵

Since Nicholas had newly set up in business, it may be that William did not have to pay a high premium for his son's apprenticeship. Whitson himself, in the *Pious Meditation*, thanked God for raising him from the dust to a fortune much greater than his father's, but it is not to be supposed that John Whitson's family was bitterly poor. There was almost certainly a premium to be paid for his apprenticeship, but there were also three sisters to be provided for; Ann, who married Abraham Willet; Alice, the wife of Edward Partridge (alias Wheeler), and Eleanor, whose son, John Howell, was one of the petitioners in the Chancery case after John's death.¹⁶ Professor McGrath, in his study of John Whitson, suggests that William Whitson may have found it difficult to provide his son with a trading 'stock' of goods or money with which to set up on his own at the end of his apprenticeship. Certainly, John's cousin, Christopher, had very little capital when he first tried to set up as a draper and experienced many difficulties, ending with two years in the Fleet prison in London.¹⁷ Aubrey reports, mistakenly, that John was apprenticed to Alderman Vawer, but it may be that he worked for the alderman during the years 1578 to 1585 when we hear nothing of him.¹⁸

By 1590, John was in a position to help his cousin. Nicholas Cutt, his former master, died in 1582 and, if Whitson had left his service in the meantime, he then returned to help the widow run the business.¹⁹ Bridget had been married for thirteen years but may well have been no more than thirty-three by 1585 when Whitson would have been about twenty-eight. John Aubrey takes up the story, 'He was a handsome young fellow; and his old Master . . . being dead, his Mistress one day called him into the wine cellar and bade him broach the best Butt in the cellar for her; and truly he broached his Mistress who after married him. This story will last perhaps as long as Bristol is a City.'²⁰ Aubrey's love of a scandalous tale is well known but in this instance he may well be right. He had spent some time in the St. Nicholas Street house and may have heard the story from the old man's own lips. The registers of the parish church of St. Nicholas show that the marriage took place on the 12 April, 1585 and that the first child, Bridget, was christened on 2 November, an interval of only 204 days between the

marriage and the christening.²¹ Whitson took up the freedom of the City on 17 March, 1585, being sure by then of a marriage which would bring him wealth and a business of his own.²²

The marriage was apparently a happy one. Whitson seems to have been blessed with a sweetness of disposition which usually precluded quarrelling and unpleasantness.²³ He was welcomed, not only by his wife's mother, Anne Saxey, who conveyed to them valuable property in High Street, Wine Street and Horse Street,²⁴ but also by the Cutt family, who must already have known him almost as a brother in the house. Bridget bore two more daughters but they did not survive childhood; Catherine, baptised at St. Nicholas' on 12 December, 1586, was buried in 1589, and Ann, baptised on 2 July, 1588, died ten years later.

The oldest girl, Bridget, was said to be the 'Flower of Bristol' and the apple of her father's eye, like the lovely Anabel in the masque *The Fair Maid of Bristowe* (1605), 'Faire Bristows miror and my harts delight.' In 1603, she married Sir George Trenchard of Wolverstone in Dorset and died in childbed in 1606.²⁵ Had she lived to inherit her father's wealth, there might have been no Red Maids' School. Much ink has been spilled in debating the question of the motives of sixteenth and seventeenth century merchants in founding schools. The sad circumstance which united the original merchant founders of Bristol Grammar School, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and the Red Maids' School was not religion but childlessness. Civic pride had also its place, but much more important was compassion for the poverty and suffering they saw always around them and a determination to do something about it. Such charitable giving in the Middle Ages would have been channelled through the Church. In John Whitson's day it was usually administered by the Mayor and Aldermen and he very soon had the opportunity to take his part in that administration.²⁶

After his marriage, Whitson's career progressed rapidly. In 1586 he was collector of the town dues in All Saints' Ward and in 1590 his name appears on the Subsidy List there, assessed at £10 in goods, next to his mother-in-law, Anne Saxey, assessed at £5. These amounts were nominal only; the highest assessment in the City was Philip Langley at £28.²⁷ Whitson soon became a City Councillor and held the office of Sheriff in 1589–90, the year in which William Bird, as Mayor, was gathering funds to free John Carr's lands and set up Queen Elizabeth's Hospital for orphan boys on the pattern of Christ's Hospital in London. Whitson was energetic and diligent; he had joined the exclusive group of City Councillors and served in the

rather arduous and expensive office of Sheriff; he became an Alderman in 1600 and served as Mayor in 1603–4 and in 1615–16.²⁸

His business flourished in spite of wars, foreign embargoes and monopolies. Aubrey records that he had 'a very good healthy constitution, and was an early riser, wrote all his letters and dispatched his business betime in the morning. He had a good natural wit and gained by the Spanish trade a fair estate.' However, it was by no means all work. 'He kept his hawks,' and was fond of riding, keeping six horses and continuing to ride until his death from a fall at the age of seventy-two or seventy-three.²⁹ He dealt especially in wines. In 1589 he told the Court of Requests that he had often sent Canary wines, sack, white and claret wines to Hereford and Holme Lacy to a total value of £545 18s. 6d.³⁰ During these years of war with Spain, Bristol ships were beginning to venture much further afield. In the year 1598–9, he freighted seven ships to Leghorn, Marseilles, La Rochelle and the Breton ports with fish, calfskins, cloth, lead and coal. In return, ships came from Toulon with oil which the customs men valued at £436, and from Zante with fifty tons of currants valued at £1,500, as well as packing canvas and salt from La Rochelle, Newfoundland fish and fish oil, all marked for 'John Whitson and others of the Company.' In the same way, he may have had a share in cargoes under the names of other merchants of the Bristol Company. That year, ships arrived for Company members 'and others . . .' from Madeira with sugar and wine; from Toulon with oil, alum and salt; from Tenerife with Canary wine; from Venice with muscadel, almonds, aniseed and brimstone; from Bordeaux with Gascon wines, and from St. Jean de Luce with Spanish iron and wool, pitch, rosin and licorice.³¹ In 1601, John Whitson shared in cargoes of oil, soap and anniseed from Toulon valued at a total of £4,327 10s. 0d. and a cargo of currants and nutmeg from Cephalonia in which the currants alone were valued at £2,291 5s. 0d. These lucrative trades continued into the years of peace and Professor McGrath notes later voyages to Ireland, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Danzig and, in 1620–21, a venture to Barbary.³²

Whitson did not escape the usual accusations of defrauding the customs and, in 1597, the customers alleged that he had declared a cargo of currants as prunes, to avoid paying the heavy duty and imposition then levied on currants. On another occasion, it was reported that he and other merchants had failed to pay duty on imported alum and nutmegs but in neither case was any further action taken.³³ These imports were distributed throughout the whole area of Bristol's trade, from Kendal to Penzance. It is interesting

to find a cargo transhipped for London. On 26 May, 1591, the *Elizabeth Bonaventure* of Bristol, Matthew Whitson, master, (perhaps a kinsman) sailed from Bristol for London with a cargo of 177 'India' hides, six chests of Brazil sugar of three different sorts, three tons of brazil (dye) and ten tons of lead, laden by John Whitson and John Hopkins.³⁴

Freight charges on his ships must also have been a lucrative source of income, as also the occasional prize cargo. Among various anecdotes about Whitson which the Rev. John Eden included in his edition of the *Pious Meditation*, was the story of the *Maryflowre* and *Seabrake*, fitted out by a group of merchants, including Whitson. When they returned with prizes, Whitson's conscience would not allow him to retain the prize goods, part of which (by the law and custom of the sea) should have gone to the crews. He therefore sold his share and gave the money to the Bristol almshouses. The ships he sold to Thomas James, because he thought no good would come of them. Eden then relates how the *Maryflowre* burned at Hungrood through the careless overturning of a candle and the *Seabrake* was lost in a storm when the crew were all drunk.³⁵ It is unlikely that Thomas James regarded this as an instance of Whitson's goodness, but this alone would hardly account for the quarrel between them in 1620, which seems to have been a genuine dispute about precedence in the Council Chamber. It may be that Whitson was the Sheriff whom James accused of stealing his goods while he was in prison after the murder of Gethin in 1587. James, who was even more accident-prone than Christopher Whitson, was able to rebuild the *Maryflowre*, re-naming her the *Pleasure*. He was probably not very well liked; it seems that when the dispute arose in the Council, all the Councillors except one voted for Whitson. However, if Whitson did indeed resolve in the 1590s to have no further dealings with prize cargoes, his resolution was forgotten by 1626–7, when he wrote three letters to Edward Nicholas, secretary to the Lord Admiral, begging for a share of prize cargoes brought into Bristol.³⁶

Seabrake and *Maryflowre*, with Whitson's other ships, *Discoverer* and *Speedwell* are commemorated in the names of four of the houses of the Red Maids' School. The *Discoverer* and *Speedwell* were sent out in 1603, 'for the farther discovery of the north part of Virginia.' Martin Pring, leader of the expedition, anchored in a bay that he named 'Whitson Bay' which has been identified as Plymouth Bay, where the Pilgrim Fathers later landed. The seamen quickly made friends with the natives but took care that they were accompanied most of the time by their two great mastiffs, Fool

and Gallant. *Discoverer* set out on her homeward voyage with a cargo at the end of July and *Speedwell* followed in August, arriving in Kingroad on 2 October. It seems probable that the voyage was not profitable, since it was not followed up.³⁷

By the 1590s Whitson was a member of the Bristol Merchants' Company and was appointed one of the feoffees of the Merchants' Hall in 1600. The Bristol Merchants had been members of the Spanish Company of London since 1577 and, with the advent of peace in 1604, the Spanish Company's privileges were confirmed, a new patent was granted and the list of members then included ninety-seven Bristol men. The four Bristol assistants were John Whitson, William Ellis, John Hopkins and Thomas James. In 1605 the Bristol men determined to regain their independence in the new post-war spirit of freedom of trade. Alderman Whitson was present in the Council Chamber on 31 December, 1605, when it was decided to reorganize the Bristol Company and 'exempt themselves' from the dominance of London. John Hopkins was chosen as the Master and William Vawer and John Whitson, wardens. Whitson was Master in 1606–7 and in 1611–12 and, as one of the Bristol M.P.s, was concerned in the fight against purveyance, the monopolies held by the Londoners and the unsuccessful attempt to obtain a charter which would give the Bristol Company a monopoly of overseas trade.³⁸

The proceeds of trade and his first wife's inheritance had made Whitson a rich man. In 1599, William Cutt, the last surviving son of John Cutt, died and, by his will, devised the Manor of Burnett, purchased from the Queen by his father in 1560, to John Barker and Matthew Haviland to the use of his brother's widow and her second husband, John Whitson, for their lives 'and to the survivor, with power to the husband to grant leases, and then to Bridget, their daughter and her heirs for ever; and for want of such issue, John Whitson reserved power in himself to enfeof the property to such purposes as he should think fit at any time during his life, and in default of such conveyance then to his right heirs.' The total area of the Manor of Burnett was 661 acres and, at the time of Whitson's death it yielded £90 a year.³⁹

He was already becoming known in the City as a benefactor. The years 1594–7 were famine years when, after four good harvests in northern Europe, cold and rainy summers ruined the crops and prices doubled. The first year, the Mayor, Francis Knight, bought corn for the common people and Thomas Aldworth also was said to have spent £1,200 on corn

for the poor, bringing some to the market each day to keep the price steady. In the autumn of 1595, grain was still scarce and the Mayor, William Parphey, asked Whitson to obtain 3,000 quarters of Danzig rye. Thomas Offely of London contracted to import the rye and he and Whitson agreed a price of 28s. 0d. a quarter, the rye to be delivered before the end of May, 1596. The Mayor thought this much too dear and said he would pay only half the cost. However, by the spring, the rye was worth 44s. 0d. or more on the market. Then the Mayor and Aldermen begged Whitson to let them have the grain and would have paid him the full market price and all his expenses. 'Whereunto,' says the Chronicler, 'after some persuasions, he (being of a good nature) consented and within twenty days after, this rye was all sold at 5s. 0d the bushel, much under the rate of the market; many pecks and half bushels was given among the poor of this City. And in conclusion, there was gained upon this bargain £774, all charges and petty charges being deducted.' The following year it was agreed that each Alderman and Burgess should provide one meal a day to as many poor people as he could, 'whereby the poor of our City were all relieved and kept from starving or rising.'⁴⁰

The use made of the unexpected wind-fall of £774 is instructive; most of it 'was employed at the Parliament by Sir George Snig, Recorder, and William Ellis, merchant, to procure an Act of Parliament for Orphans causes to be tried and determined in Bristoll in such manner and form as is now and was accustomed in London.' This seems to have been little more than a confirmation of the constitution and powers of the Court of Orphans, where Whitson must often have sat after he was appointed the Mayor's assistant there in 1599. The Act relieved all the charity estates from the penalties of the Mortmain statutes and strengthened the powers of the Mayor as Guardian of the Orphans.⁴¹ The Mayor for the time being was responsible for all orphans, their lands and property, their education and their marriages. Until they were of age, their money was deposited in the City Chamber and became available for loans to merchants who could provide sufficient sureties. In 1576, it was agreed that the Court would sit every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon and, in spite of occasional complaints, the system seems to have worked well.⁴²

The Act of 1597 had also a second purpose, it was concerned with the validation of the setting up of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital in Bristol. The Council had petitioned Lord Burghley in 1589 that they might found 'an hospital for the needful relief and education of poore Childrene and

fatherless infantes within the said Citty,' and had received Letters Patent from the Queen in 1593. 'The Bill for the City of Bristol' had its first reading in the Commons on Monday, 28 November, 1597, was committed and amended and finally passed in the House of Lords on Thursday, 15 December.⁴³ It is not clear how much John Whitson had to do with the decision to obtain this Act, but it is likely that, as the money was obtained by his purchase of the rye, he probably took some interest in it.

It may have been the passage of this Act through Parliament which first drew the attention of Lady Mary Ramsey to the Bristol school. She was the daughter of William Dale, a Bristol merchant who had moved to London many years before. She and her husband, Sir Thomas Ramsey, were great benefactors of Christ's Hospital School in London and Thomas Heywood, in one of his plays, shows them viewing portraits of earlier merchant philanthropists and Lady Mary mused

'Why should not I live so, that, being dead,
My name might have a register with theirs?'⁴⁴

Hearing of the Bristol school, she added a codicil to her will, dated 8 July, 1601, 'And, moreover, I give to the Mayor and Commonalty of the City of Bristowe, where I was born . . . the sum of £1,000, to be bestowed . . . in lands and tenements towards the maintenance of the hospital of Bristowe, or such other purpose as my executors otherwise shall direct or appoint, for the good of the same City.'⁴⁵ The will was proved on 29 October, 1601 and in February, 1602, Mr. Whitson and four other members of the Council were appointed 'to survey the lands at Winterbourne which is offered to be sold by Mr. Butler of London, to the City, for the employment of the money given by my Lady Ramsey.' In June, Whitson, with the Mayor and four others were empowered to buy the land for which they eventually paid £1,400, £200 being contributed by Mrs. Anne Colston and the other £200 by the Mayor and Council.⁴⁶ Even before this, in June 1599, Whitson had been appointed to survey Carr's manor of Congresbury to see what income might be derived from it for the school and, on 17 July that year, he was among the Councillors 'appointed to take order that the children of the hospital be Employed in the afternoons in some necessary work.'⁴⁷

Whitson seems always to have enjoyed the company of young people. Aubrey noted that 'he was charitable in his life in breeding up of poor scholars. I remember five that had been bred up under him, but not one

of them came to good, they lived so luxuriously.' These may have been his apprentices, for he and Aldworth were exceptional in the large number of their apprentices. Alternatively, these 'scholars' may have been 'tablers' from the Grammar School staying as weekly boarders in Whitson's house.⁴⁸ From its inception, the Mayor and Council 'took upon them to be special Governors of the said Schools and did yearlie vysitt the said Schole and choose four overseers thereof.' Each year at the end of September, the Aldermen and Councillors were allocated to a series of committees to carry out the work of town government and, whenever he was not Mayor or busy with Parliamentary duties, Whitson was one of the four overseers of the Grammar School. On 27 November, 1598, Whitson, with Francis Knight and William Vawer were appointed 'Surveyors of the Free Schole at the Bartholemews and to take order for the Reformation of suche matters as they find amiss there.' He was able to help poor boys to go on to Oxford; boys such as William Haywood, the son of a hooper in Baldwin Street and another boy for whom he arranged a grant from the Council to enable him to go to Balliol in 1616. That year, when he was Mayor, he also secured a grant of £2 a quarter 'to him (who) now keepeth the newe library by the Marsh in Bristol.'⁴⁹

In February, 1601, the Schoolmaster and the Usher of the Grammar School asked for a rise in salary. Whitson was one of the committee appointed to consider their complaints, and, as a result, it was decided to increase their salaries for five years, the Master to have £6 13s. 4d. and the Usher £3 6s. 8d. a quarter. The School had virtually no funds as the Bartholomew lands had never been relinquished by the heirs of Robert and Nicholas Thorne, the School's founders.⁵⁰

By 1600, as Professor Neale once pointed out, there was a great need to tidy up institutions 'surprized by Time,' institutions which needed a 'common solution of some of the problems of modern life – that of poverty, for example.' The Elizabethan Statute of Charitable Uses of 1601 was one of the measures which, with the Elizabethan Poor Law and the Statute of Artificers, aimed to ameliorate the conditions of poverty, famine, disease and crime which troubled the late sixteenth century. The Act aimed to prevent the misuse of charitable funds, since it enabled the Chancellor to set up a Commission to ensure that the wishes of the donor were carried out. The Commissioners might order recompense to be made where property had been misused and their decrees were to be enrolled and sealed in the Court of Chancery.⁵¹ It was clear that the 'heir was the least likely person to devote

the requisite part of the deceased's personal property to its intended pious or charitable ends,' and it was this statute which enabled John Whitson and other Councillors to obtain judgement against Alice Pykes in 1610 and 1617 and so reclaim the Bartholomew lands for the Grammar School. A further indenture conveyed the lands from John Whitson and Abel Kitchen, as trustees, to the Mayor, Burgesses and Commonalty of Bristol for the benefit of the School.⁵²

The Council then turned its attention to the Grammar School at Redcliffe. On 7 April, 1612, it was agreed 'that Mr. John Whitson, Alderman, with privy and consent of Mr. Mayor and Aldermen, shall deal with George Owen, Esq., for the purchasing of the lands given by George Owen Esq., deceased, to the Mayor and Commonalty for the relief of certain poor people . . .' This bequest included a sum of £4 a year 'to the Master of a grammar school founded in the parish of Redcliff.' There are earlier references to a school in the parish of Redcliffe even before the bequest made by Dr. George Owen, one of Henry VIII's physicians, in 1558, and the school had received its Charter from the Queen in 1571. Whitson, by an agreement with Dr. Owen's descendants, secured a deed in which George Owen conveyed certain lands to the Mayor of Bristol for £200. Thus the endowment was safe and Whitson, in his will, left rent to the annual value of £8 10s. 6d. and three and a half bushels of wheat and the same of rye each year 'for the maintenance and preferment of the schoolmaster . . . he being an earnest and learned scholar and endeavouring to set forward poor freemen's children . . . in the English and Latin tongues.'⁵³

The Bristol Councillors were concerned to see that all the bequests they administered were 'imployed accordinge to the charitable intente of the givers and founders thereof,' as the law demanded, and in 1605 they set up a committee of seven Councillors to go through the records and make sure that all bequests were being used precisely according to the will of the donor. In October, 1620, they agreed that a table of all benefactions to the City be made and set up in the Council Chamber and Christopher Whitson and others were given the mammoth task of going through the Books of Wills to list them. Then they were to set down their opinions, 'What course they think fit to be taken for the relief of the poor people of this Cytie, by setting them to work or Imployeing or placing them to labour whereby they may get their livings and how the charges thereof may be rayased, either oute of the money so geven or otherwise.'⁵⁴ John Latimer, the Bristol historian, found a fragment of a Commission of Charles I in 1628, addressed to the Mayor,

the Bishop of Bristol, the Recorder, John Whitson as senior Alderman and other citizens. It was endorsed, 'An Inquisition taken in the 4th year of Charles I of all benefactions in this City . . .' There is no further record of this commission, but there is no doubt that throughout this period, the King's council and the City Fathers were very much concerned with the related problems of poverty, vagrancy and crime.⁵⁵

When Whitson became Mayor for the first time in September, 1603, plague was already raging in the City. The Chronicler says that it began in Pepper Alley, off Marsh Street on 18 July, and that, by Michaelmas, fifty people had already died. Whitson's first act was to call for a special tax on the more wealthy citizens of 2s. 0d. in the £1 according to the assessments in the subsidy book, 'for and towards the relieff and mayntenaunce of the poor people within this City – this time of Infection.' There was little enough they could do and, by the end of February, 2,956 people had died, some 2,600 of them of plague. In May, Whitson asked for another 2s. 0d. in the £1 'for the relefe of the poore infected people of this Citie; and for the kepinge of those that are infected – whole howsholdes from goynge abrode out of there howses until order be taken for there release.' It seems as though he had introduced some form of quarantine and a few years later the Council was planning to set up a pest house. It is interesting to find that when, in 1625, they were taking precautions against the plague spreading to Bristol from London, Alderman Whitson was the man to be consulted.⁵⁶

The plague of 1603–4 was followed in 1606–7 by a very severe winter with floods and extremely hard frost, so that even the small birds died, 'that in riding 100 miles in summer a man could scant see a blackbird.' This was followed by great scarcity in 1608–9, so that some sixty foreign ships came to Bristol with corn until the good harvest of 1609 brought wheat prices down to 4s. 0d. a bushel. This seems to have been a period of great difficulty in Bristol. The cloth industry was severely affected, partly by the long wars on the Continent, partly by the movement of much of the industry into the countryside and the increasing monopoly of the cloth export by the London merchants. Sampling in the surviving parish registers suggests that the population rose from 9,500 or 10,000 in 1545 to about 12,000 at the end of the century, to be cut back by plague and famine to about 10,500 in 1607, when the Mayor took a census to discover how much corn was needed to feed the inhabitants each week. Such a severe decline in population almost certainly meant numbers of homeless and destitute children. The schools, such as Bristol Grammar School, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, the Cathedral School, Redcliffe and a school for the

children of seamen run by the Merchants' Company, which were set up or reorganized during these years, were a part of the Council's effort to deal with the situation. In 1589 they set in hand extensive repairs to an old schoolroom over Frome Gate to provide 'a schole house to teach children to knitt . . . wosted hosen there.'⁵⁷

In 1610, craftsmen from Colchester were invited to set up the making of bays in the City, but with little success. The following year, a man and woman were settled in a house in Temple Parish, 'to teach such poor children as shall be sent thither to learne to spynne.' This project continued for several years. In November 1617, the Chamberlain was to spend £200 'towards the setting of poore people on work,' and butter was to be purchased to be sold to the poor at a reasonable price. In 1618, William Crispin of Newton Abbot was to have £3 a year 'for each child he receives and teaches the "Newe Work" in the new work house in Temple Street, to the number of forty children.' In June 1618, Whitson, Barker and others were to confer with Edward Cannon and his son about a scheme for giving poor children work and January 1623 saw yet another attempt to provide work for the unemployed when John Betterton was allowed £50 to 'ymploye the same in cloth-making and settinge the pore on work.' Later that year they negotiated with William Player to supply coal to the poor at a special rate 'for the good of the City,' and Dr. Chappell was to be paid £1 a quarter as long as he was resident in the City and gave help 'to his best skill to such poor people within this City as shall repaire unto him for advise.' Still the numbers of poor people increased, partly 'by reason of strangers,' most unemployed and many begging. The Poor Law and the Statute of Artificers had to be enforced and stocks of materials were raised in the parishes to set the poor on work, sturdy beggars were to be punished, the House of Correction made ready and many hundreds of Irish refugees were shipped back to their native land. It was within this background of a conscientious and resourceful City Council grappling with almost intractable social problems that John Whitson lived and worked and in which he played a leading part.⁵⁸

The problems of the poor as well as those of the merchants seem to have been often in Whitson's thoughts as one of the Members of Parliament for Bristol in the Parliaments between 1605 and 1626. He spoke occasionally and sat on a good many committees. In 1610 and 1621 he acquiesced in the imposition of subsidies but, on both occasions, opposed 'fifteenths' because 'the fifteens arise upon the poorest sort.' He supported Strode in the Addled Parliament of 1614 in calling for a petition to the King against impositions

on imported goods. In 1621, Whitson himself brought in a bill concerning 'the making of good and sufficient cards for wool.' He seems to have made a good speech, showing the importance of the 'cards' in cloth-making, which won the support of the House. At other times he spoke about fishing voyages, Welsh cloth and butter, the export of wool and charges at inns. He opposed a Bill which would have prohibited the import of corn, showing how necessary it was to certain traders and ending his speech, 'We must not make a bill for the farmer, that the poor may curse us.' He opposed a Bill for the reduction of interest from 10% to 8% on the grounds that it would be more difficult to reckon, but it may be that his interests in money-lending overcame his better judgement in this instance. His commercial interests were also at stake in the Bill for the freedom of Trade. He would 'not speak against companies but they should not restrain others.' His attacks on the Catholics were typical of the times, even in their occasional ferocity, but there is no reason to suppose that he or most of the other Bristol merchants inclined to Puritanism. Professor McGrath takes the view that, though the 'tone' of wills and their preoccupation with sermons and lectures may seem to indicate Puritan tendencies, 'there is no evidence that any merchant before the Civil War was associated with a Puritan party.'⁵⁹

During his last Parliament, Whitson served on a committee to enquire into abuses at Charterhouse, the school set up in London by the Newcastle merchant, Thomas Sutton. J. F. Nicholls reports Whitson's last speech in the House as ending with the words, 'I desire so to rectify that which is past as to provide for the future,' which may mean that in 1626 he was already meditating on the will that he made the following year or it may have been that his mind was made up as early as 1622, though he did not then declare it.

After the dissolution of Parliament on 6 January, 1622, Whitson probably returned from London in a thoughtful mood. He had represented Bristol already in three Parliaments, including the stormy Addled Parliament of 1614. He had just witnessed the impeachment of Bacon and a violent dispute with the King over the Commons' right to discuss foreign policy. Many members must by then have despaired of the possibility of reconciliation between King and Commons and were probably sickened by the corruption and extravagance of the Court. Whitson later summed up his feelings in the *Pious Meditation*, 'I have been a Representative Member in many Parliaments, where I daily learned new lessons of the world's vanity, and augmented my grief together with my experience.'⁶⁰

He had amassed considerable wealth and he had been married three times, but there were no children to succeed him. His first wife, Bridget, died in 1608 and, within the year, he married Magdalen Hynde, widow of William Hynde, citizen and drysalter of London, who already had two children. Aubrey says that she was very beautiful, 'as by her picture (at length) in the Dining rome doeth appear.' Magdalen died in 1615 and on 18 May 1617, Whitson married another widow, Mrs. Rachel Aubrey, who outlived him. Professor McGrath notes that John Whitson's inventory includes, in the Great Parlour, 'the deceased's second wive's picture with a curtayne and a curtayne rodd,' the only one of some forty pictures in the house which had a curtain, and he speculates whether Whitson valued the picture and wished to care especially for it or whether 'the third Mrs. Whitson did not want to be so continually confronted with the picture of her beautiful predecessor.'⁶¹

It may be that, except for his wife, 'the joy of my heart, the stay and comfort of mine old age,' he had little in common with his surviving close relatives and he turned to a project he must have had in his mind for some time. On 16 March, 1622, he called together his trusted friends, John Doughty, Abel Kitchen, George Harrington, John Barker, Christopher Whitson, John Tomlinson, Humphrey Browne, Alexander James and Walter Stephens and to them and 'their heirs and assigns for ever' he enfeoffed all his lands and properties. Listed there in the document are houses in the parishes of St. Stephen's, St. Leonard's, St. Nicholas', Christ Church, St. Phillip's and Redcliffe; the Barbers' Hall and the Skinners' Hall; his own house in St. Nicholas Street and country lands and property at Dundry, Keynsham and in the county of Hereford. The lands at Burnett, Keynsham and Charlton and some of the Bristol property he reserved for his own use during his life and to Rachel during her life and then to his children, if any, and their heirs. If there were no children, the whole estate would revert to the feoffees who must dispose of it as he would prescribe in his will. Seisin of the estates was granted to the feoffees in October that year.⁶²

This was the most usual way of leaving property in trust so that the income might be used for charitable purposes, 'that is, by making over the property to a body of trustees on whom was also laid the duty of disposing of the income for the purpose specified.' The number of Trustees might vary from three to twenty or more, with provisos for filling places vacated by death and a new feoffment was made at intervals of some thirty years or a generation. The proper administration of such a trust depended on the integrity of the administrators and the Chancery Court was concerned



John Whitson

to enforce the duty of trustees so as to protect the charity.⁶³ Although this was the custom by which the Bristol merchants maintained the possession of their Hall, the same procedure had not been followed in setting up the Bristol Grammar School and Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and it may be that the difficulties he encountered in dealing with the affairs of the various Bristol Schools caused him not only to hand over most of his property to a body of trustees, but also to begin preparing the house for the Red Maids at the Gaunts before his death in 1629, even to the extent of purchasing a 'great new copper kettle which was provided for the hospitall at iii^{li} iii^{is}.'⁶⁴

On 7 November, 1626, Whitson was stabbed in the face by Christopher Callowhill while he and Alderman Guy were sitting in Court on a Chancery commission to settle a dispute between Callowhill and William Tresham. It was a dangerous knife wound through the nose and cheek into his mouth, but he recovered and it was in remembrance of this escape that he left money for a sermon to be preached each year on the anniversary at St. Nicholas' Church and which is celebrated by the Red Maids as Founder's Day. A few months later, on 27 March, 1627, he made his will but, in spite of his age, he was still well and active, rejoicing that he still retained his health, eyesight and sharpness of mind. His death, on 25 February, 1629, was caused by a fall. As Aubrey described it, 'he dyed . . . by a fall from his horse; his head pitching on a nail that stood on its head by a smith's shop.' He was then about seventy-two years of age.⁶⁵

Whitson had asked for a quiet funeral with few mourners, but it was not to be supposed that such a man, who had served the City as Mayor and Member of Parliament and who was known for his wealth and his charities, would be buried without the usual ceremonies. Aubrey recounts that, 'He was buried very honourably; besides all his relations in mourning, he had as many poor old men and woemen as he was years old in mourning gowns and hoods, the Mayor and Aldermen in mourning; all the trained band (he was their Colonel) attended the Funerall and their Pikes had black Ribons and the Drummes were covered with Black Cloath.' Ricart adds that the 'musketeers gave him 3 volleys of shot at his interring' and the City Chamberlain accounts for £5 13s. 4d. 'for gunpowder which was spent at the funerall of Mr. Alderman Whitson.' There were many bequests to family, friends, apprentices and household servants and the overseers allowed Mrs. Whitson £20 for her mourning clothes. Christopher Watts, freemason, was paid £26 6s. 8d. for the monument at St. Nicholas', William Saunders, smith, £11 for its iron gates and Mr. Palmer £1 for the epitaph. The funeral

feast was remarkable for the variety of fish that was served, from salmon, shrimps and lobster, sole, plaice, carp, roach and dace to the dried cod which was then called 'poor John.'⁶⁶

Whitson's inventory, compiled in June 1629, describes a large house, comfortably furnished, with a great store of linens, plate valued at £308 18s. 4d., a diamond ring, a gold chain and a chain of pearl. There were 'bookes great and small, some lattin, and some English and one Spanish booke,' to a total value of £3, and many pictures. The value of the Inventory was £5,408 17s 4d. including £800 of ready money in the house and £500 for 'Adventures at Sea.' Not included were 'Desperate debts' of £3,000 and, of course, the lands and property in Bristol and Somerset and in the counties of Hereford and Worcester. There were feather beds, blankets, rugs and embroidered cushions and many objects from overseas; an Indian lantern, two East India carpets, a white Turkish cloak, Portugese chairs, Dutch canvas, pieces of Arras and, in Mrs. Whitson's closet, glasses and porcelain dishes. There were stocks of iron, lead, salt, soap and dyestuffs and a great many weapons and some armour. He usually wore 'a Dudgeon, with a knife and bodkin,' according to Aubrey, 'which I suppose was the common fashion in their young days.' No wine is mentioned but it was quite usual to hire a suitable cellar elsewhere in which to store the wine.⁶⁷

In the *Pious Meditation*, John Whitson expresses a wish to leave something more precious than mere material bequests, 'some part of the knowledge and experience wherewith time' had enriched him. 'Ere I depart to my long home, I have a great desire to leave some monument of my good will to aftercomers; that what my long experience has taught me, may turn to the profit of those whose early years have not as yet afforded them such plenty of observations.' His bequests included £20 a year to the Mayor and commonalty for the relief and comfort of twenty poor women in childbed and £1 a year to his wife and, after her death, to the Mayor's wife, for distributing this charity. There was the bequest to the Schoolmaster at Redcliffe and £10 a year to the school at Newland. He left £12 a year to the poor at Clearwell and £20 to the poor at Burnett. £250 was to be lent each year as a stock to five young merchants, 'meere merchants' and free burgesses, who were to have £50 for seven years, giving a bond for the repayment of the £50 at the end of the term and 10s. 0d. interest each year. The 50s. 0d was to be distributed among poor householders of St. Nicholas' parish each Christmas. Another £250 was to be lent to twenty poor handicraftsmen or tradesmen, inhabitants and free burgesses of the City 'of good name and

fame,' £12 10s. 0d each for seven years. There was also a bequest for two sermons at St. Nicholas' each year, one on November 7th, the other on the Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude.⁶⁸

He seemed to retain in his old age a sense of the extreme vulnerability of the young; a gentleness perhaps evoked by the memory of his own childhood and his little girls. 'Man, the weakest of all creatures, is sent into the world tender and defenceless, altogether unarmed and nothing but his reason allowed for his guard.'⁶⁹ Throughout his life in Bristol, one of his main concerns had been the provision of schools for those who were able to profit from education and work or apprenticeship schemes for those who needed them. He could hardly have failed to notice that most of the schools took only boys, even Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, which John Carr had said should be modelled on Christ's Hospital. Whitson, often in London, must surely have known that Christ's Hospital admitted girls as well as boys.

In his will he set out to redress the balance. The Burnett estate would yield £90 a year. With this, the Mayor and Aldermen of Bristol were to provide 'a fitt and convenient dwelling howse, mansion or habitation for the continuall abode or residence from time to time for ever of one grave, painefull and modest Woman of good life and conversation, whether married or unmarried, haveing a husband well quallified and of like good life and of honest conversation and for Fortie poore women children (whose parents, being freemen and burgesses of the said City, shalbee deceased or decayed) either in some convenient rooms in the new mansion house of the Gaunts or Hospitall of Queene Elizabeth in Bristol or in such other necessary place within the liberties of the said City of Bristol as to them, the said Mayor and Aldermen shalbee thought expedient. And shall cause the said mansion or habitation to bee furnished with convenient lodgeing, beddinge, lynninge and other necessaryes for the comoditie and use of the said Woman and Fortie women children, and that the said Mayor and Aldermen shall thereunto admitt the said Woman and Forty poore women Children and cause them to bee there kept and mainteyned and also taught to read English and to sowe or to do some other laudable worke towards theire maintenance, as the Mayor's wife of the same Citie for the time being or the auncientest Alderman his wife in her absence for the time being and the said Woman shall approve of.'

The girls were to be admitted between the ages of eight and ten and were to stay until they were eighteen. They were to be apprenticed to the Mistress who would have the proceeds of their work and provide them with

their food and clothes, including the 'double apparel' usual at the end of an apprenticeship. On entering the hospital the children would have double apparell provided by their parents or friends. Any child found 'unclean or unwholesome' was to be removed on the order of the Mayor's wife who would visit the girls regularly. Each year the Mayor would pay the Mistress £2 for each child in her care, 'and shall cause every one of the said children to goe and be apparelled in redd cloth.' On festival days the girls were to attend on the Mayor and Aldermen, as the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital did, to hear sermons on Sundays and at other 'solemne meetings' of the Mayor, the Aldermen and their wives. The surplus income should be laid out in household goods and repairs and 'such servants as shalbee necessarily imployed or requisite to attend in or about the keepeing, educateing and bringing upp of the said poore children, and for the relief or maintenance of more other poore women children in the said dwelling howse or place, to be admitted by the Mayor, his wife.' Of the residue of his estate, Rachel was to have a third, the rest was to go to the City for charitable purposes.⁷⁰

Each generation has interpreted this will according to its own needs and prejudices and it may be that this was essential to the survival of the school. It was two centuries before any servants were employed to care for the girls who, until recently, have always done a good deal of the housework. The system of apprenticeship to the Mistress was much criticized in the early nineteenth century, since it might mean that girls were kept too long at their spinning or sewing, to the detriment of their health or their education, and there is no doubt that this happened at times. However, the seventeenth century saw the apprenticeship system as a safeguard and the regular visits of the Mayoress or the Aldermen's ladies should have prevented any abuse. Possibly they were not very conscientious in their duties. The Founder said nothing about marriage portions which were first mentioned by the feoffees as a useful way of helping the girls in their later lives, but seem always to have been controversial.

The problem of placing the girls in suitable employment when they left was a very real one. The City registers show girls apprenticed as housewives, shepsters, weavers, sempstresses and 'broiderers', and lace-making, button-making, silk-knitting, the making of pin-cushions, jersey and silk fringes, stocking-knitting, sewing, reading and writing were all seventeenth-century trades for girls. Women who could practise such skills in their own homes and take a few chosen apprentices were unlikely to move into the school and take on the responsibility of caring for and teaching forty poor orphans.

Successive Mistresses taught the girls what they could, usually housework, spinning, sewing and sometimes reading. The result was that their work in the school was sometimes not very profitable and the only job open to them when they left was domestic service. Thus the convenient legend grew up that the Founder had said that they should be trained to be good servants. The other pious legend still subscribed to is that of the 'amazing generosity' of the founders of such schools. There is nothing intrinsically generous in merely apportioning one's property after one's death. Where John Whitson excelled was in the immense amount of time and trouble he gave to the affairs of the City, the care with which he tried to help the poor and the foresight he displayed in setting up a school for girls. The Puritans were not the only ones who well understood the social responsibility of wealth and merchants were regularly taught to pray for pity, 'not to eat our morsels alone, but that the fatherless, poore and widowes, may eat with us, and that our fleece may cloath them, and their loynes may bless us.' Such men, with a strong practical sense, were quick to identify a need and at once sought ways of dealing with it.⁷¹

Rachel Whitson, as executor, proved the will and possessed herself of Whitson's personal estate, said to be upwards of £8,000. The Mayor and Council of Bristol then appealed to the Chancery Court that, 'The Mayor and Comminalty at the Testator's request, in his life tyme had provided a meete and convenient house to place the woman . . . and fortie poor women children, and did therein disburse three hundred pounds, or as this court should order, and would place twenty of the forty poor children there presently if the Executrix would pay in the over-plus.' They complained that she had combined with the other relatives to frustrate the Feoffment and the Will. Some of the legacies had been paid, but she had neglected the getting in of debts and refused to pay the money left to charitable uses to the Feoffees.⁷² Several of the Aldermen, the Town Clerk and the Chamberlain were in court to hear the opening of the case in the autumn of 1633. Whitson's was not the only case they were involved in and there was much travelling to London during the ensuing year, and the Chamberlain noted the purchase of '2 copies of decrees about charitable uses.'⁷³

In his judgement, the Lord Keeper, having sought the opinions of four Judges, decreed that, 'First, as touching the repaire of the said house in Bristoll for poore Mayden Children there, that the same was done at the request and appointment of the said John Whitson, the Testator, and that he did promise to repay out of his estate all such moneys and charges.'

He allowed the Mayor and Councillors £270 for the building and £180 for other expenses. They were also awarded costs. Half the value of a ship which had not yet returned to Bristol must be added to the estate and a token £20 for the furnishings at Burnett. Whitson's account books must be produced in Court, with a schedule of the debts still owing to him. Of the money in hand, two thirds must go to the Trustees and one-third to Rachel, the legacies to his sisters and their children having already been paid. Alderman Barker and Nicholas Meredith, who were in Court, promised that the Trustees would do the best they could for William Willet, one of the co-heirs.⁷⁴ From time to time, in later years, the Trustees did pay out small sums for descendants of Whitson's relatives who had fallen on hard times.

The settlement of a merchant's estate was often extremely complicated, involving the winding up of partnerships, the valuation and sale of goods abroad or in store, the return of ships from distant voyages and the collection of debts from remote parts of the country. In Whitson's case it was noted that 'one, Hannam, servant and Cash keeper to the Testator,' who could by his oath clear up a doubtful point, 'was then beyond the seas.' Barker and Meredith and their men-servants were in London for more than six weeks that term, 'about Mr. Whitson's business,' at a total cost to the City Council of £43 3s. 8d. The Chancery Decree Rolls show a good many similar cases during these years, concerning money left for schools or for other charitable purposes; at Bruton, Tiverton, Campden in Gloucestershire, the Plymouth Hospital of Orphans, Sevenoaks School and Christ's Hospital in London, for example.⁷⁵

The case in Chancery was not determined until 10 December, 1634, but in April of that year the Feoffees met to make a Declaration of Trust. They repeated the terms of the Will which applied to the Red Maids' Hospital, noting that Whitson 'himselfe procured' a house 'to be fitted and prepared in his life time . . . and did in his life time declare that he resolved and determined to have a certain number of the said children settled in the same house while he lived. Now for as much as his good purpose and intencion therein was, as we conceive, prevented by his death, wee therefore thinke meete that there bee an honest poore woeman and sixteen poore maidens with all convenient speed settled in the said howse.'⁷⁶ It seems that the Mayor and Council thought not or, for some other reason the money was not then forthcoming, for it was not until the 16th September that the Mayor set up his committee to choose the mistress and twelve girls to be settled in the new Hospital at the Gaunts in College Green by mid-October.⁷⁷ The accounts

were kept in triplicate and show the sums given by the feoffees to the City Chamberlain each year from their funds, but the amount spent on the Hospital in the first few years is not separately detailed.

By September, 1642, Alexander James, who had succeeded John Barker as Receiver of the Charity, held a balance in the Charity account of £473 3s. 8d. which he and four other Trustees counted into four bags and put into a chest until it should be needed. Then, on 20 October that year, the Mayor, Richard Aldworth, and most of the Aldermen met the remaining Trustees at Whitson's house in St. Nicholas Street, 'being the first meeting where was read the will of Mr. Whitson and the declaration of good uses and the last feoffment and there was for them a moderate dinner provided.' The accounts were agreed and Francis Yeamans was appointed Receiver, giving his bond, and was allowed 20 nobles a year 'for his paines now and past.' They put the bond into the chest with copies of the original feoffment made by John Whitson, the release made by the co-heirs and some other documents. They then recorded an agreement that the Mayor and Council, having already received £520, and that day the £480, within six months would receive £160 more and should give to the feoffees an annuity of £58, paid quarterly. £26 was to be for poor men in the Merchants' Almshouse and £36 for poor women in childbed, to make up that charity to a full £52 a year. They thought that any surplus might be given to the Red Maids as 'preferment in marriage, by £10 or £20' provided they had served their apprenticeships faithfully 'and well and honestly demean themselves and continue of good life and conversation.'

A new feoffment was made that year since all the original feoffees were dead except Alexander James and John Tomlinson. By the advice of the Recorder and others, an indenture was made between James and Tomlinson on the one hand and Richard Aldworth and the Members of the Common Council on the other, reciting the original Feoffment and the Will and it was agreed that there should be a meeting each year of the Mayor and Aldermen and the Feoffees at Whitson's house about St. Luke's Day to read the Will and the Declaration of Trust.⁷⁸

The accounts of the City Chamberlain continue to record regular payments to the Mistress of £9 a quarter for the maintenance of the twelve girls. By 1641 she was called Elizabeth Reade, so it seems probable that 'Mistress Baylie' had married. She was also paid for 'some small necessities for the maides and for the hospital,' as ordered by the Mayor. In December, 1640, a bill was paid which included

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| rugs | £1 19s. 0d. |
| linen | £10 5s. 0d. |
| for making | 17s. 6d. |
| for shoes | 19s. 0d. |
| for bodices | 16s. 0d. |
| for cloth | £12 12s. 0d. |
| the tailor | £1 5s. 6d. |
| | <u>£28 14s. 0d.⁷⁹</u> |

In 1646, there was a similar bill –

For Apparrell for the Maids against Easter 1646 disbursd by order these sommes viz.

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| To Francis Cox, draper, as per note | £8 17s. 8d. |
| To Mr. George Hart for Lynnen as per note | £6 2s. 0d. |
| To Anthony Patch, Tayller, for making the clothes | £1 2s. 6d. |
| To Edward Duddleston for a dozen of bodices | 18s. 0d. |
| To the Mistress of the Hospital for stockings, shoes and makeing the smocks as per note | £2 3s. 0d. ⁸⁰ |

Each year there were similar bills from tradesmen for repairs and decoration at the house. For example in 1644:

By order of the Feoffees disbursd in August 1644 for reparacions of the Maids Hospitall these sommes foll. viz.

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| To William Fox mason as per his note | £11 7s. 0d. |
| Anthony Atkins tyler as per note | £7 18s. 0d. |
| Edmund Dacres plumber as per his note | £5 3s. 0d. |
| Richard Rogers smith per note | £2 10s. 0d. |
| Anselme Smart glasier as per note | 12s. 3d. |
| William Lloyd overseer of the work as per note | £12 13s. 2d. |
| Widow Lewis hallier as per note | 19s. 0d. |
| Thomas Wickham carpenter per note | £16 10s. 0d. ⁸¹ |

It is difficult to discover whether the hospital was much affected by the Civil War, since most of the City records continue as if nothing unusual was happening. It was probably the short siege and capture of the City by the Royalists in July, 1643 which put the girls in most danger.

The City's north-western defences ran from a fort at Hotwells to Brandon Hill and along the high ground to the top of St. Michael's Hill and on to Stokes Croft. There must have been a good deal of excitement and some apprehension as Prince Rupert's troops advanced to the attack and Colonel Washington's men broke through near the top of what is now Park Street and advanced along Park Row. There was some fighting along the hill-side and a part of the Royalist army later marched down to College Green and occupied the Cathedral, St. Augustine's the Less and the Mayor's Chapel, next to the houses of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and the Red Maids. There, they came under fire for a time from the Quay and from the Water-fort at Hotwells. The only mention in the records is the mending of a pipe at the Gaunts which had been broken by the soldiers but whether this happened in the fighting is not recorded.⁸² Prices seem to have risen considerably, partly because of the war and partly as a result of some severe winters, such as the 'great snow' of January, 1644. The Mistress of the Hospital was granted an extra £2 10s. on 6 July, 1648, 'towards buying her corne in these hard times,' and, in the 1650s, she was granted an extra 4s. 0d. a week 'for present augmentation.' It may also have been difficult to find places for girls who left, as several received gifts of money of between £1 and £3, or this may have been instead of the 'double apparel' due at the end of an apprenticeship. The parents of girls sent home because of sickness were also paid a small sum.⁸³

In September, the committee of Mayor and Aldermen decided to appoint two former Mayoresses as visitors to the school and laid down a set of rules for their guidance.

2 September, 1654

Mrs. Cicely Hinde and Joane Hobsom, Widdows

You both are hereby authorised and appointed to be visiters of the hospitall of Maids, wherein you are required to be faithfull and to follow the Instructions here under written.

Imprimis: You are uppon two daies in each moneth in the yeere privately in your owne persons to visit the Children.

2 You are to enquire into the health of them.

3 You are to take notice of their cleanness and convenient change soe as they may be kept sweet and free from varment.

- 4 You are to make enquiry concerning their diet and to see that they have what is convenient.
- 5 You are to take notice of their imployment and to see that they be duely taught to read English and to work upon those things which may be to their preferment hereafter.
- 6 You are to see that two of them every week by turne may be imployed about household affairs.
- 7 You are to see that as any of them go to be placed abroad, others be brought in their roomes by the direcion and approbacion of the Mayor and Aldermen.
- 8 Upon all occasions as you find cause you are to report to the Maior and Aldermen, that they knowing what is amisse remedy, may be applied accordingly.

This does not necessarily mean that something was seriously wrong at the Hospital. There is no other evidence of trouble there and it may be that, on reading the Will that year, the Mayor realized that the Hospital had not been regularly visited by successive Mayoresses, as the Founder prescribed.⁸⁴

Schools for girls were few in sixteenth and early seventeenth century England though there were a number of highly educated women, of whom Queen Elizabeth, Lady Jane Grey, the daughters of Sir Thomas More and the daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke are probably the best known. The great teachers of the Renaissance, Erasmus, More and Vives all advocated the education of women, but in a very narrow sense. However noble in rank, however learned, 'let those books be taken in hand that may teach good manners.' In addition to their Latin and Greek they should be taught to be 'sober-minded, to love their husbands, to be discreet, chaste, housewifely, good, obedient to their husbands.' Wives of merchants needed to be able to read and write so that they could run the business and their large households when their husbands were away, possibly overseas. Many widows remained in trade and Rachel Whitson herself took apprentices after John's death, as Bridget Cutt had done when Nicholas died, so many years before.

Luther thought every town should have a girls' school, in which 'little maids might hear the Gospel for an hour daily, whether in German or in Latin' and Comenius saw no reason why the 'weaker sex' should be excluded from 'the pursuit of knowledge.' Mulcaster agreed, but advised that, after attending the petty-school, where they learned to read, boys and

girls should go to separate schools, where the girls might learn to read and write, sing and play an instrument and possibly learn languages as the boys did. Thomas Becon thought that schools should be set up for girls 'in every Christian commonweal, and honest, sage, wise, discreet, sober, grave and learned matrons made rulers and mistresses of the same.' He also suggested they should be well paid for the job and no writer advocated the 'farming' system which had been set up at the Red Maids' Hospital. In practice, few girls went beyond the petty school, as Comenius complained, 'Why should we admit them to the alphabet and afterwards drive them away from books?' Books were available, they had 'growne so common in all languages and nations, that even common country people and women themselves are familiarly acquainted with them.' Even Sir Thomas Overbury's Chamber Maid read 'Greenes works over and over, but is so carried away with the *Myrrour of Knighthood*, she is many times resolv'd to run out of herselfe, and become a Ladie Errant.'⁸⁵

Outside of the romantic literature of the time, however, girls were usually educated according to their social status. In 1617, the pupils of the recently set up Ladies' Hall at Deptford are recorded as having played a masque before Anne of Denmark and the Court at Greenwich, but the founders of schools for poor children looked to Christ's Hospital for a pattern. Such schools, of which the Red Maids' seems to have been the first to be set up just for girls, were endowed for 'teaching and instructing the daughters of the poor inhabitants to read, spin, sew and acquire any other skills useful for getting an honest living.' Thomas Offley, possibly the London merchant from whom John Whitson bought the rye, provided in his Will of 1645 for both a boys' and a girls' school in his native village of Madeley in Staffordshire. Sir Francis Nethersole founded a school in 1655 at Polesworth in Warwickshire, with separate classes for boys and girls, with a master and a mistress, the latter to teach the girls to 'read, write, work the needle and the principles of the Christian religion.' In 1683, Bartholomew Hickling of Loughborough left £4 a year for the stipend of a schoolmistress and £6 each for twenty girls to be provided with books and with gowns, shoes and stockings. They were to be the children of the poorer inhabitants of the town and were to be taught the alphabet, the true spelling and reading of English, good manners and behaviour and the grounds and principles of the Christian Religion. Christ's Hospital itself, which had opened in London at Christmas, 1552, had usually only one ward of about forty girls in London as most of the others were below

school age and were put out to nurse in the country. The girls wore a blue dress with a white, green or blue apron, white coifs and peaks and yellow stockings. For a long time the only subjects of instruction were reading and needlework, the Bible being the only reading book until about 1750. When Rachel Whitson died and money became available to provide accommodation for the full complement of forty girls, the Red Maids' Hospital became very much like the Girls' School at Christ's Hospital and in most particulars was run according to John Whitson's will.⁸⁶

CHAPTER II

The Hospital, 1655–1790

Rachel Whitson died in the autumn of 1654 and was buried at St. Nicholas' on 18 September, that year. She does not seem to have taken a great interest in the Red Maids, but did distribute the 'lying-in' money to poor women in childbed. With her death, the estate of Burnett, near Keynsham in Somerset, with its 661 acres yielding £90 a year came into the possession of the Hospital.¹ The Trustees had earlier purchased the Prebendary of Bedminster but that reverted to the Church at the Restoration and they later bought Caswell Farm near Portbury. At that time, lands and town properties were held on copy-hold leases for ninety-nine years or three lives, a system which was phased out late in the eighteenth century in favour of rented tenancies, which gave a much more flexible yield in times of inflation. At Burnett, in addition to the farms, there was a large manor house, held by a Mrs. Day for many years in the eighteenth century and later by Sir James Wilson and his wife. The living of the Church there was also in the gift of Whitson's Charity.²

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, little appears in the records about Burnett, except for the rather high costs of the Trustees' annual visits, but later it was very carefully managed by successive members of the Sturge family, appointed by the Council and paid by the Charity. The Surveyor, John Player, reporting in 1781, found that by then Burnett produced a clear annual income of £127 5s. 0d. He continued, 'On my survey of this Estate, I found it in excellent order, it having been improved greatly by Draining, Graving, etc., and the Buildings in exceeding good repair, the whole having (to appearance) almost undergone rebuilding, especially the Mansion House and the Offices thereof; and on the spot where the messuages called Bush's and Quarman's were, is now lately erected a neat convenient House fit for a genteel family, all which must have cost many Hundred Pounds and is a great improvement to the estate.'³

From time to time, more lands were purchased in the area and at Dundry to extend and consolidate the properties. As well as providing an income from rents and from the sale of timber, the lower levels of the Burnett estate, around Bishop Sutton and extending towards the River Chew, came within the Pensford coal area. An account of the profits of the

'Cole work at Burnett' as early as 21 June, 1708, shows that the feoffees received £55 18s. 6d. that summer and gave the 18s. 6d. to the colliers. The £55 was to be paid half on 1 August and half on 1 September. In 1731, William Carset and John Nash were granted liberty 'to dig for coal in the Manor for thirty years, paying a tenth free.' The Charity seems usually to have been a good landlord. Any mention of eviction is extremely rare in spite of considerable arrears of rent at times. In 1685, Mr Tripp of Burnett Farm was allowed an abasement of rent at the time of 'Monmouth's attempt' and occasionally the Charity contributed for the maintenance or repair of the Church and towards the setting up of elementary schools on its lands.⁴

The Bristol historian, Barrett, states that, as a result of Rachel Whitson's death and the acquisition of the Burnett estate, 'it was referred to the City Surveyors' on 3 April, 1655, 'to consider about erecting an hospital for Maids adjoining the House hitherto used for that purpose, according to Alderman Whitson's gift.' However, it was not until the 25 September, 1655, that the Mayor reported to the Common Council that an agreement had been made between the Mayor and Aldermen and the feoffees of Alderman Whitson. He reminded them that Whitson's will provided for 'the maintenaunce of forty poore maids in an Hospital to be erected for that purpose, where they should be trained up in severall employments, fitting them for service or otherwise.' £90 a year was then settled on the hospital from the rents of Burnett, £30 from Caswell Farm and the Council agreed to give another £40 from the money left them by Whitson for general charitable purposes. The 'government of the Hospital was to be in the hands of the Mayor and Aldermen and the oversight' to the Mayor's wife for the time being. To accommodate the full complement of forty maids, the feoffees were to build a new house near the original one at the Gaunts on College Green, building to begin on Lady Day, 1656, and to be completed by the autumn. In the mean time, the extra income was to be given to the feoffees to help with the costs of building. In November, 1659, the remainder of Whitson's Bristol property, which had remained in the custody of the Mayor and Council, was transferred to the feoffees.⁵

In 1665, a new feoffment was made without consultation with the Mayor and Aldermen, and, when this was reported to the Council the following April, there was considerable anger. 'The House resolved and agreed . . . that a new Feoffment be made forthwith by . . . the new Feoffees to such persons as the Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council shall appoint.' If the new

Feoffees refused to do so, then the Council would appeal to the Chancery Court 'at the charge of the Mayor, Burgesses and Commonalty of this City.' Apparently, they were compelled to do so, as the Charity accounts for the years 1665–8 record the expenditure of £38 10s. 2d. 'expenses in the law suits brought by the City' and a later note, dated 1668, at the back of the book adds that the suit in Chancery brought by the Mayor and Aldermen 'confirmed the new feoffees.' It seems that an agreement was reached that each new feoffment should appoint as feoffees the whole of the Common Council of the day, Alexander James being the only one of the feoffees to dissent from this arrangement.⁶

In the meantime, the new house had been built and was opened at Christmas, 1658. The payment of £120 0s. 0d. a year from the Treasurer to the two Mistresses begins that year, 'paid by the contract of the Feoffees with the Mayor and Aldermen to make up £120 per annum,' to which the City Chamberlain added the City's contribution of £40. By the mid-eighteenth century Treasurers became increasingly lax in making up their accounts and three, four or five years often elapsed between entries, though the full amount was then recorded and it is not to be supposed that the money was withheld from the Hospital. However, it seems that the Mistresses only received the full sum when the House was full. They were supposed to have £4 a year for each girl but, by 1733, deductions were being made on a daily basis by the Chamberlain, James Hollidge, and the need to keep some 'Accounts of Garles In the Rede Maids Hospittall' seems to have placed a considerable strain on the limited powers of writing and calculation of the Mistress, Joanna Reece. It is not clear when this system was introduced nor what happened to the money which was deducted.⁷

M. G. Jones, in her book on the Charity Schools, comments that 'to be well run, a hospital had to be very carefully supervised. Ceaseless and untiring supervision was demanded. It does not appear that the hospital schools received it.' This may well be true of the Bristol Hospital Schools during some periods of the eighteenth century. The problem of supervision was much better dealt with in the four Edinburgh schools: Heriot's School for boys, founded in 1659, which was followed in 1695 and 1704 by two girls' schools, the Merchant Maiden Hospital and the Trades Maiden Hospital, and another boys' school, founded in 1734. The constitution and the duties of the large body of Governors was very precisely laid down. They were to meet once a month and to take turns in visiting the four schools frequently, where they were to write their comments on the management

of the hospitals and the progress of the pupils in the visiting book. A list of questions to be asked on each visit was set out in the Rule Book which was compiled in 1776.⁸

At Heriot's, as at Red Maids', the Treasurer was the most important official and had to stand for re-election each year, a practice which would have saved the Red Maids a considerable loss later in the century. Because of the 'farming' system at Red Maids', the Treasurer was not compelled to visit the School regularly to pay wages or settle bills and the Governors or Feoffees seem to have visited very rarely, leaving that duty to the Mayoress, who might not take the trouble. The Treasurer paid all the other charities provided for in Whitson's will and, for the Red Maids, he paid for clothes, bedding, household repairs and, later, books and medicines, and all the bills were probably handed to him at the Council House rather than at the school. He not only listed all the items in his account books, but was supposed to keep all the receipts, bills and vouchers to show at the five-yearly audit. Masons, tilers, glaziers and smiths seem to have been regularly at work in the houses and some of the annual bills seem very high. The same names appear each year, 'for glazing windows and painting them' 'for mending a gout', 'for mending the roof', or the chimneys, fixing the furnace or a new fireback.

George Scuse, the smith, presented an account dated 16 May, 1709, for a new slice pan at Mrs. Dixon's house and one at Mrs. Green's; cleaning a slice and tongs; mending a flesh fork and the handle for a skimmer. A great many locks and keys were made and mended, even a lock on the bread bin on one occasion. Nails for a chest; a new door frame and bars for the boiler at Mrs. Dixon's; hooks and skewers were all supplied and chimneys and boilers frequently mended. He provided new doors for the furnace, a new handle for the great spit, a new slice pan for Mrs. Green and a new knocker, and he mended the grate, the lock on the coal house, a box iron and more keys, locks and tongs.

In 1714, Peter Orchard put in a new copper furnace and the mason bricked it in with 250 bricks. The lock was mended on the cupboard where they kept the wool, presumably for the girls to spin, and the carpenter, who was mending the floor in the maids' room, used eighteen feet of one-inch oaken boards. During 1717-19, a good deal of outside work was needed; new cornish tiles were purchased for the roof, rough tiles for the eaves and twelve pantiles with tile pins and nails. Several windows were mended. A new branch pipe was fitted for the water supply, with a new brass cock.

Recd Jan^y 25th 1709 of W^m Saunders by
Order of y^e Mayor and Aldermen Six Pounds
as their free Gift this Dear Type, 2
towards y^e better Support of y^e Children =
in y^e Hospital, I say Recd
Ann O. Green

£ 6: 00: 00⁺

Recd Jan^y 25th 1709 of W^m Saunders—
by Order of y^e Mayor and Aldermen Six
Pounds as their free Gift this Dear Type
towards y^e better Support of y^e Children in
y^e Hospital, I say Recd

£ 6: 00: 00⁺

Joan Discon

The Mistresses sign for their allowance from Alderman Saunders' gift, 1709. Mistress Green can only make her mark

The 'House of office' was rebuilt, the gout, which carried away the sewage to the river was lowered to make it more efficient and new flagstones were laid in the yard. In March 1719, Thomas Reynolds, (who always called it 'the Hostipall') levelled the garden, built a new back kitchen, made the walls higher and laid thirty-two feet of paving. The tiler and carpenter were still at work with planks to form a cover for the well, deal boards for covers for the furnace and boilers and a new lintel over the cellar windows.⁹

Among these vouchers, so carefully saved for the audit by Alderman Swymmer when he was Treasurer, there are also receipts from the two Mistresses for extra money granted them from the bequest to the school of £150 by Alderman Saunders. The money had been paid to the City Chamberlain and the City Seal for it given to the feoffees, with interest at 4%. In January, 1710, each of the Mistresses was given £6 'as their free gift this dear tyme, towards the better support of the Children in the Hospital.' Similar gifts of £6 each were given to the Mistresses in January, 1716 and January, 1719.¹⁰

Sheets, bedding and rugs were frequent purchases, as well as clothes for the girls. The arrival of a new Mistress or a visit from the Mayoress was often the occasion for such purchases, which seems to indicate that there was insufficient supervision to ensure that the Mistress bought these necessities regularly. In 1692, the Treasurer recorded a payment to 'Mr. Stevens, for sheet cloth etc. for the Hospital by Mrs. Mayoress Jackson's order.' Other goods were ordered by Mrs. Mayoress Lane later that year and linen cloth was bought by Mrs. Mayoress Arundel. When Mrs. Ann Green became one of the Mistresses, in 1691, she purchased a great many new things for her house and Mr. Green was paid for various repairs.

Some of the bills for clothing paid at this time were,

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| paid Mr. Bubb for cloth for the hospitals | £3 4s. 0d. |
| Anne Greene for stockins, hankerchiefs, | |
| for the maidens and other linnen clothes | £5 15s. 0d. |
| Mr. Dyke as by note for Ruggs for the Hospitalls | £2 15s. 0d. |
| Sarah Hieron for Boddices for the Maides | £1 19s. 0d. |
| Edward Durbin for shoes for the hospital | £1 19s. 0d. |
| Mr. Bowler for red cloth for Mrs. Greens maidens | |
| as per note | £9 5s. 0d. |
| Mr. Dolman as per note | £6 2s. 0d. |
| Mr. Richardson for making the clothes | £2 12s. 0d. ¹¹ |

It seems that a charity school girl could be clothed for sixteen shillings a year in 1712. This included a gown and petticoat, an apron, a coif and band, a shift, a leather bodice and stomacher, stockings, shoes and gloves but no warm winter coat or cloak.¹²

After 1700, the Red Maids seem to have gone for many years without new bedding or clothes, unless other arrangements had been made for paying for them. There are some payments of interest. In 1674, the portrait of John Whitson, which hung in his house in St. Nicholas Street, was purchased, cleaned and provided with a new gilt frame. £2 was paid on Lady Day 1669, for Hearth Tax for the Hospital and the tax of 1696 provides the first list of the names of Red Maids at the school. They are called 'Red Coats' and listed in the parish of St. Augustine in their two houses, under the names of the Mistresses.

Ann Jones

Elizabeth Knott
Sarah Mason
Joan Mountain
Mary Mason
Ann Hancock
Ann Warren
Christian Brooks
Martha Knott
Mary Hopkins
Margery Byde
Abigail Bevan
Mary Phelps
Hannah Parker
Elizabeth Sweet

Ann Green

Hester Green
Katherine Thomas
Mary Nutt
Sarah Harris
Susanna Tilly
Elizabeth Marson
Sarah Sylvester
Hester Davis
Sarah Owen
Ann Ewens
Mary Wind
Susanna Middlebrook
Martha Middlebrook
Mary Wilmott
Joan Wootten
Mary Higgins
Magdalen Warn
Ann Elliott
Mary Doubly
Elizabeth Edwards

Mistress Jones' house was obviously well below its proper complement of girls and there is nothing in the accounts to explain this. Possibly she

was new or temporary or some repair work was being carried out. It seems unlikely that there were no applicants, since this was just at the time when John Cary was setting up the Bristol Corporation of the Poor because of the number of poor children in the City. It may be that in the 1690s the girls preferred to go there.¹³

Little is known about the Mistresses of the School in this first century of its existence, not even all the names. Goodwife Greenwell, the first Mistress, who died in 1640, was followed by Elizabeth Bailie. The following year, there is a reference to Elizabeth Reade, so it seems possible that Miss Bailie had married. At Christ's Hospital the marriage or death of a Mistress was often not recorded and they were given the courtesy title of 'Mistress' whether married or not, both there and at Bristol. For the rest of the seventeenth century, the mistresses are referred to just as 'The Mistresses of the Maydes Hospital' or even 'The women of the Hospitall.' It was probably in 1691 that Mrs. Ann Green took over one of the houses, while Mrs. Ann Jones had the other. From 1702–1705, Mrs. Joan Walker took Ann Jones' place, but by 1710, either she had married or her place had been taken by Mrs. Joan Dixon who, with Mrs. Green, remained at the School until the reorganization of 1722, when Joanna Reece was appointed.

Their qualifications are quite unknown. Joan Dixon signs her name in a fairly clear, bold hand but Ann Green seems only to have made her mark. Joanna Reece could write legibly and do simple arithmetic, but in rather a disorganized fashion. There is no evidence that the girls were taught to read before 1722 and it seems likely that they learned little more than housewifery, spinning and plain sewing. At Christ's Hospital and at the Edinburgh schools, the Mistress was a 'homely and simple eighteenth-century woman,' a housekeeper rather than a teacher. She might teach religion and the Catechism, housewifery and sewing and, in the Edinburgh schools, might keep a book recording the diligence and the behaviour of the children. Most of the Mistress' time was taken up in supervising girls, servants and staff and, at Red Maids', the Mistresses were concerned only with the girls in their own houses. Some charity school mistresses were ignorant, lazy and dishonest; some were cruel, others lined their pockets with money saved from the children's rations. There is little evidence of this at Red Maids' in the eighteenth century, but several were dismissed as unsuitable in the nineteenth. Letters to the S.P.C.K. in London from Bristol, Exeter, Southampton and Bath show the difficulty of obtaining

satisfactory persons outside London and, by 1712 there was a recognized training centre for teachers at Bath.¹⁴

We know equally little of the girls. The whole management of the house was left to the Mistress, who bought the food and other necessities and the stock of materials for the girls' work. From 1655, there is evidence of leaving payments to the girls to purchase clothes, the so-called 'double apparel' for the girls who would have to leave their clothes at the school and buy a whole new outfit when they left. It is possible that conditions in Bristol were particularly bad in 1655 and 1656, when the Mistress was allowed an extra four shillings a week and ten girls, 'late of the Hospital', were given extra sums, ranging from £1 to £5, on leaving, according to their needs.¹⁵

Bernard de Mandeville, writing in the early eighteenth century, maintained that after-care was at least as important as care and education in the Hospital and that in this the charity schools failed lamentably. This seems rather too sweeping an indictment and there is evidence of a demand for the children from reputable tradesmen. Many schools enquired into the characters of would-be masters. Most commonly, girls from charity schools went into service and this is not recorded in the account books because no premium was paid. An entry in 1664 records that £3 was to be given 'to Mrs. Toms to take as her servant at wages a girle that served apprentice in the hospital.' The £3 was later erased. Again, in the 1720s, there appears a payment of 5s. 0d. for Frances Hobbes from Mrs. Dixon's house to be apprenticed to William Parker. This obviously proved unsatisfactory and, within the year, she was bound instead to John Aldwin with a premium of 2s 6d. Then, in March, 1722, Sarah Ward was bound to Joseph Little, sadler, with 5s. 0d. and Mary Mint was bound to Richard Dolphin with 5s. 0d. These girls almost certainly went into some kind of domestic service.¹⁶

Thomas Secker, writing late in the century, stated that most charity girls went into domestic service of rather a poor sort, with very low wages, 'of fifty shillings or three pounds a year at most . . . till by a course of diligence and faithfulness, they can better their condition; which surely should not then be envied them.'¹⁷ The idea that the Red Maids were destined for domestic service was firmly established by 1700 and remained almost unchallenged before the 1850s. There were several reasons for this. The slow movement of industry out of the home excluded married women from industrial work, as the use of heavy machines prevented single women from working in industry. Almost the only trade for a woman was spinning and this, with the rates of pay cut by the charity schools, became a 'sweated'

trade, paying little more than starvation rates. It has also been suggested that those who supported charity schools gave the children 'a carefully limited training which should fit them for menial services.' Women in particular, 'were virtually refused access to sources of knowledge which were external to the family.' In a City like Bristol, still comparatively small, supervision and after-care would be easy, and it would be less likely that girls could be so cruelly misused as they were in certain notorious cases in London.¹⁸

The period saw a huge increase in poverty and unemployment. In trade, the eighteenth century was Bristol's 'Golden Age' when the port was second only to London; the tonnage entering the harbour rose from 19,878 tons in 1670 to 76,000 tons in 1791. People flocked into the City and its suburbs to find work and Latimer estimates the population at about 23,000 in 1712, about 36,000 at the mid-century and over 40,000 at the end of the century. Visitors commented on the forest of masts in the harbour; the smoking kilns of potters and glass-makers; the lead-smelting and soap-boiling, and the busy people; 'all are in a hurry, running up and down, with cloudy looks and busy faces.' The streets were narrow and very dirty, noisy with the 'cursing and swearing' of hauliers and brewers and the rattle of sleds and drays on the cobbles. Some of the houses were in such a ruinous state that passers-by were in danger from falling bricks and stones. All visitors commented on the mud and stench of the river and noted that affluent citizens were moving out to the more salubrious heights of Clifton or Kingsdown. As the population increased and the poor crowded into the noisome streets and courts, the gap between the wealthy Aldermen and Councillors who administered the schools and the children and their parents widened rapidly. The 'decayed burgess' of John Whitson's day, but for illness or misfortune, would have been Whitson's social equal and might have lived next door. Conditions were very different a century later.¹⁹

By the end of the seventeenth century in Bristol, the work-house system had failed completely and there were so many destitute children in the City that special measures were needed. John Cary procured an Act of Parliament in 1696 which allowed the Mayor and Aldermen to set up the Bristol Corporation of the Poor, where 120 girls could learn carding and spinning and 100 boys could be taught weaving. All were supposed to learn to read and the older ones to write and count. The Red Maids and Queen Elizabeth's Hospital were better provided for in that they had their own endowments, but their rules and daily routine had much in common with those of the Corporation of the Poor and it must be supposed that

the City Council regarded them in much the same way. At least, the two Hospitals were fortunate in being just outside the crowded centre of the town. Most eighteenth century visitors were pleased with the area around College Green, which had 'several fine houses and makes by its situation... much the pleasantest Part of the Town.' Later in the century, it was still 'deemed the healthiest Place in the City, it being pleasantly situated.'²⁰

There is a suggestion in 1709 that all was not well at the Red Maids' Hospital. On Wednesday, 3 June, that year, the Common Council agreed that the Mayor, three Aldermen and two Councillors should form a committee, 'to inspect Alderman Whitson's Charities and consider what is to be done or altered touching the same and to make their report therein to this House.' However, no evidence has been found of a report emanating from this committee, or any action taken, except for the occasional grant of £6 each to the two Mistresses from Alderman Saunders' gift.

On 18 April, 1722, the Council was informed that complaints had been made, 'touching the irregular management and discipline of the Red Maids' Hospital of this City.' The Mayor, John Beecher, the two Sheriffs, John Rich and Noblet Ruddock, Alderman Yate, Alderman Walker, Alderman Hicks, Mr. Swymmer, who had been for many years the Treasurer of the Hospital, and Mr. Price, or any five of them (the Mayor being one) were to form a committee to inquire into and inspect the state of the Hospital and report back to the Council at the next meeting. One month later, on 20 June, the committee presented its first report. They were of the opinion that, 'the present Mistresses or Governesses of the Red Maids' Hospital are not of a capacity to undertake the education of those Charity Girls in any useful or beneficial way, so as to render them capable of maintaining themselves in time to come and that the only business they are at present employed in (to wit, spinning of wool) is mean and unserviceable and no ways conducive to make them Servants in private Familys at riper years.'

The report recommended that Mrs. Green and Mrs. Dixon should be removed and more capable teachers employed, 'to take care of and to instruct those children in sowing, reading and writing and other useful management of housewifery and domestic affairs, as directed by the Founder.' They thought that £4 a year was inadequate for the maintenance of each girl and insufficient to attract qualified Mistresses and so recommended an allowance of £7 a year for each girl and decreed that the Mistresses should still have, in addition, the proceeds of the children's own work. Thus the pernicious 'farming' system continued, but the girls were to be under the same regime

for food and lodging, clothes and other necessities as the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital. The report ended by pledging 'that if any Deficiency shall happen from the Settlement of the Founder by this necessary change, the same shall be defrayed by the Chamber of this City as long as this House shall think fit to continue the same.' The Report, having been read aloud to the Council, was unanimously accepted.²¹

Spinning was not only a poor education for the girls, but was unlikely to bring the Mistresses an adequate return, as the good ladies who set up the Ladies' Charity School in Baldwin Street in Bristol in 1755 soon found, though their aims were modest and their rules sensible. In contrast, the girls' schools in Edinburgh offered a great variety of work and advertized regularly in the Edinburgh papers and, when the girls left, each had a share of the profits.²² At the Red Maids' School, the committee continued its work throughout the summer of 1722 and, on 7 September, produced another document suggesting drastic changes in the organization of the Hospital. First, they recommended that all forty girls should live in one house, 'under one Head Mistress or Governess, with proper teachers or Instructors under her to educate and afford them necessary directions in sowing, reading, writing and other instructive management in Housewifry Affairs.' They recommended that all the girls should live in the house occupied by Mrs. Dixon, which they thought to be capacious enough with some minor repairs and alterations, and much more convenient than separate establishments. The house which Mrs. Green occupied could then be altered and made into one or two tenements or dwelling houses to be let to tenants, which would help to meet the cost of the proposed changes. They reiterated that the girls should have the same rules for diet and lodging as the Blue Coat boys except that, whereas the boys needed new clothes every year, the girls needed new things only every two years. The girls should have ordinary daily wear regularly provided for them, with shoes, stockings, linen, sheets and other necessities and a suitable store of such bedding, clothes and household goods enough for the first year should be provided as soon as the house was ready to receive them. The Councillors unanimously approved this second report and the committee was 'directed and empowered' to see that 'the purport and effect of the same Report be put into due execution.'²³

Mrs. Green and Mrs. Dixon left and Mrs. Joanna Reece was appointed Mistress, probably taking over the Hospital from Michaelmas, 1723. A list of girls in the School at that time shows that there were only thirty-three girls there, fifteen originally in Mrs. Dixon's House and eighteen who had

moved over that year from Mrs. Green's. Their ages ranged from ten to fifteen in Mrs. Green's House and from seven to seventeen in Mrs. Dixon's. Several of the girls had entered the school below the age of eight or over the age of ten, contrary to the rules. There seems to be no plan in placing the girls in one house or the other and even those whose common surname seems to suggest that they might have been sisters were not necessarily in the same house. Possibly, the mixture of ages meant that the older girls could look after the younger ones. There is no indication of how many of the girls were orphans or what criteria determined their entry to the school.²⁴

Girls in the Red Maids' School when Mrs. Dixon left and Mrs. Reece came in.

| Mrs. Dixon's House | | | Mrs. Green's House | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|
| | Age | stg | | Age | stg |
| Sarah Watkins | 17 | 7 | Mary Baker | 15 | 4 |
| Mary Collins | 15 | 7 | Sarah Payton | 16 | 6 |
| Jane Merrick | 15 | 6 | Mary Ivey | 16 | 7 |
| Mary Dennis | 10½ | 5 | Katherine Stagg | 15 | 4 |
| Jane Cooper | 11 | 4 | Ruth Reece | 13 | 3 |
| Elizabeth Daniel | 13 | 5 | Jane Clements | 15 | 6 |
| Elizabeth Roach | 11 | 4 | Mary Benson | 14 | 4 |
| Elizabeth Hodges | 11 | 3 | Mary Purefoy | 14 | 4 |
| Rachel Dollin | 13 | 2½ | Hester Cannings | 12 | 4 |
| Elizabeth Greenwich | 7 | 1 | Elizabeth Jefferis | 14 | 4 |
| Anne Day | 8 | 3 | Sarah Shusall | 12 | 4 |
| Elizabeth Elver | 9 | 2 | Susannah Butcher | 10 | 2 |
| Sarah Slade | 10 | 2 | Mary Reece | 12 | 2 |
| Jane Larky | 9 | 2 | Sarah Rickets | 15 | 1 |
| Mary Morris | 11 | ½ | Sarah Tiley | 12 | 2 |
| | | | Martha Dollin | 10 | 2 |
| | | | Susanna Evans | 10 | 4 |
| | | | Mary Merrick | 14 | 4 |

(stg. standing or years at the school.)

Some of the older girls were apprenticed during the following years at the age of fifteen or sixteen. On 19 December, 1723, Kathleen Stagg was apprenticed to Humphrey Mathews, joiner, for five years; the following April, Mary Baker was placed with William Mead, drugget-maker for five

years, and Sarah Watkins went to Thomas Reynolds, the mason. Sarah Payton became 'distracted' and was sent to the Mint at St. Peter's which was used to house the destitute and the sick. There the poor girl had to be 'corrected' by the officers at a cost of 1s. 6d. to the school. This left only twenty nine girls in the school, but six were admitted on 13 December, 1723; three on 13 April, 1724; one on 14 April and one on 19 August, so that by the following summer, the house held its full complement of forty girls. Mrs. Dixon petitioned the feoffees for a pension, 'by reason of her great age and that she was but in mean circumstances.' The Mayor and Council agreed to give her £20 as a free gift. She applied again in 1726 and 1729 and in February, 1730, the Council agreed to grant her a small annuity.²⁵

Meanwhile, the Council set about improving and enlarging the two houses and one was let eventually to William Leech, tiler, at £20 a year and the other was made ready to receive the girls, something like £464 10s. 11d. being spent on building and repairs in 1723-4.²⁶

Clothing and 'other necessities' were ordered and the list for 1723-4 included

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Kersey for petticoats | £3 10s. 0d. |
| 95¾ yards red broad cloth | £20 17s. 6d. |
| shoes | £7 10s. 0d. |
| gloves | £2 3s. 0d. |
| boddices | £6 6s. 0d. |
| stockings | £3 0s. 0d. |
| for the tailor | £2 17s. 0d. |
| linen | £32 14s. 0d. |
| Joanna Reece's expenses and work | £8 1s. 5d. |
| blankets | 10s. 6d. |
| bedding | £15 18s. 0d. |
| 10 chamber pots | £1 10s. 0d. |
| John Wilson for 10 Dyches spelling books | 8s. 4d. |
| a book for the Hospital committee | 3s. 6d. |
| a deal box with a lock and key to hold the | |
| Treasurer's book, City Seals, etc. | 1s. 6d. |
| William Berrow for mending Alderman Whitson's pictures | 7s. 6d. |
| John Jacob for oil and colour | £12 10s. 0d. |

In June, 1727, Mrs. Frances Wall sold the school twelve Bibles for 2s. 8d. and twenty-eight more were obtained from London at a total cost of £4 18s. 0d. so it seems that Mrs. Reece did intend to teach the girls to read, even though spelling and reading take such a lowly place in the accounts. Thomas Dyché's book, *A Guide to the English Tongue* was published in 1707 and went into many editions during the eighteenth century.²⁷ However, John Latimer may well be right when he suggests that 'the extent of the improvement effected was insignificant. Down to the end of the century the instruction of the girls was confined to reading, and some of the Mistresses could scarcely scrawl their own names.'²⁸

The health of the girls seems to have been poor. Sarah Mayors died in 1730 and the school paid for her funeral 14s. 10d. and 5s. 0d. for the shroud. In 1733, Elizabeth Town died on the 2nd April and Ann Bullock on the 11th. John Deverel, the surgeon, visited the school frequently and the account of John Jacob, apothecary, for the period January 1730 to June 1731 is quite a long one, with its pills, decoctions, cordials, potions and powders, hartshorn and julep.²⁹

It becomes increasingly difficult to check that the Mistress received the £7 a year for each girl. The Receiver's Book records the £120 paid by the Charity and the City Chamberlain paid the City's contribution of £40 a quarter, deducting each time for any vacancies. Mrs. Reece's accounts for the two quarters of 1733–4 when the house was full, show her signing for the full £40 from the City Chamberlain, James Hollidge. In December, 1735, when there had been some vacancies, she signed for only £38 1s. 6d. On 13 December, the Council appointed a committee 'to inspect the accounts of the Red Maids' Hospital in this City.' If they found a deficiency, the Chamberlain was to make it good, 'the same not exceeding the sum of one hundred and twenty pounds.' By 1737, they were searching their records to see how they had become liable for the payment of £120 in addition to the £40 originally promised and, in 1739, they voted to discontinue £80 of the annuity, 'because howsoever it was wanting then, it is plain it is not so now, because the City pay them interest for £1,100 which has of late years increased and because the Mannour of Burnett is much improved.' Latimer reports that in 1739 James Hollidge was unable to account for several thousand pounds of the City's money entrusted to him and it may have been the loss of more than £2,400 which could not be recovered from Hollidge or his sureties which caused the Council to review their expenditure. The Mistresses were still supposed to receive £7 for each girl but, from 1740 to

1761, Joanna Reece and her successor, Mary Becher, rarely received even the usual £120 from the Treasurer since deductions often made it less than £100 a year, though the Receiver always paid the Treasurer £120. The City continued to pay its share and at the same time, large sums of money were invested by the Charity in the City Chamber, amounting to £4,000 by 1771, with interest at 3%, 3½% and 4%, according to the dates of the seals.³⁰

Between 1730 and 1762, the Receiver's Book was not made up for five, six or seven years at a time. Few repairs to country properties or at the Hospital are recorded and the main expenses concern coach hire and meals when the Trustees visited Burnett. In 1745, after a lapse of seven years, the book was made up and £840 was said to have been paid to the Mistress of the Hospital during those years. Other payments totalled almost £300 but no vouchers could be produced for corresponding payments to tradesmen or for the distribution of the various charitable bequests.³¹ When Edward Cooper, the Treasurer, died in 1762, a committee was appointed to go through his accounts and reported that 'a balance of Four hundred, and thirty four pounds, ten shillings and five pence is due to the said Charity from the Estate of the said Alderman Cooper.' The Committee recommended that all the receipts of the Charity should go to the City Chamberlain and that all accounts should be made up and audited on or before the second Wednesday in December each year.' They also recommended 'that no gentleman continue in office as Treasurer of any of the Charities for a longer time than three years.' After that the Receiver's Book of Whitson's Charity was not made up for fifteen years, during which time the Mistress of the Red Maids' Hospital was said to have received £1,800 from the Treasurer.³²

Joanna Reece's name disappears from the records in the 1740s and, on Tuesday, 22 September, 1747, the Committee of Mayor and Aldermen met to elect a new 'School Mistress of the Red Maids' Hospital.' Before discussing the merits of the candidates, they read the clause in the Founder's Will 'relating to the Foundation and Establishment of the said Hospital... and it was agreed that whosoever shall be elected as School Mistress... should be chosen on express condition to continue in the same place only during the pleasure of the Mayor and Aldermen and should at all times be conformable to all Rules and Directions established by the said Will or which have been made by the Mayor and Alderman for the time being relating to the same Hospital.' There were two candidates, Mrs. Grace Taylor, widow of John Taylor of Bristol, inn-keeper, and Mrs. Mary Becher, widow of the Rev. Henry Becher. They seem not to have been interviewed

at this meeting, but their applications were read and discussed and Mrs. Becher was unanimously chosen to be the new Mistress. The widow of a clergyman would have the advantage here and Becher was a well known name in eighteenth-century Bristol. At Christ's Hospital Girls' School it was decided in 1767 that candidates should be between thirty-five and forty and unmarried and were to 'be examined by the Upper Grammar Master as to their ability in teaching needlework and other works usually taught in the said school.' One would imagine he would be as knowledgeable about that as the Mayor and Aldermen of Bristol.

Mary Becher stayed at the Red Maids' School for thirty years and seems to have introduced some worthwhile reforms there. Reading and singing, as well as needlework were encouraged and some of the girls may have learned to write. In March, 1751, £6 15s. 10d. was paid to Mr. Thomas Cadell for books for the Red Maids and there was a similar payment of £7 5s. 0d. in 1760. After that date, the payments which were made by the Treasurer, Alderman Cooper, were not regularly recorded. Various casual payments between 1769 and 1778 include more books from Thomas Cadell, Mary Ward, 'stationer and bookseller,' and to Richard Edwards for psalm books and for 'instructing the children to sing.'³³

In the Charity Schools, education aimed to condition the children for their role in life; to teach them 'the plaine accomplishments which best become the generality of the people.' Religious and moral training was considered of the first importance, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' Mrs. Trimmer described the education usual for girls. Reading lessons began with the alphabet and continued from a spelling book, 'the lessons of which chiefly consist of sentences collected from the Scriptures... As soon as they can read and spell a little, they are put into the New Testament, and go through that in the same manner, without regard for any thing further than improvement in the art of reading. They learn, by stated regular tasks the columns of spelling in the spelling books.' From the Catechism, they moved to the book of Common Prayer, learning the Ten Commandments, the Creeds and the Psalms. They studied the New Testament and then the Old Testament and finally they might read *The Whole Duty of Man* before leaving school. There was much learning by heart and they were allowed to begin to learn to write only when they could read well and then by copying phrases from the Bible or from books such as Aesop's *Fables*. On Sundays and Holy Days, the Mistress and Teacher would accompany them to Church, to sing as the

music master had taught them. Gratitude to the School and to its Founder was constantly stressed, as well as the virtues of humility and hard work.³⁴

Business concerning the Charity Schools was dealt with, not in full Council Meetings, which were infrequent, but by the exclusive and powerful committee of the Mayor and Aldermen. This has caused some historians to think that the schools were neglected; 'The Red Maids' was, and remained for a further century, the 'Ugly Duckling' of the Corporation's educational institutions.' This was far from being the case and C. P. Hill is nearer the truth when he comments that the early eighteenth-century council seems to have taken its responsibilities seriously. After the reorganization of 1722, the School was reasonably well cared for according to the standards of the day. The first extant eighteenth-century volume of the committee's minutes starts on 6 July, 1739, with the extract from the Will concerning the School and continues with the resolution that, in future, all girls admitted to the Hospital should be apprenticed to the Mistress of the Hospital until the age of eighteen and not then apprenticed 'as hath been accustomed.' As they neared the leaving age, they were to be employed in the Kitchen and instructed in Housewifery 'in order and to the intent they may be sent out for servants. And the Mistress shall pay forty shillings with each maid at her so going out in lieu of double apparell.'³⁵ Girls were no longer to be apprenticed at fifteen or sixteen, a system bitterly attacked by Mrs. Catherine Cappe in her description of the Grey Coat School at York. Whereas boys at sixteen would be learning a trade and eventually might be treated almost as equals by their masters, girls could never aspire to such a position. Mrs. Cappe supposed it possible that a docile girl could be happily bound to a Master and Mistress, 'who are conscientious, gentle and humane, who keep no other servant that might counteract their kindness and who have no pampered children suffered to tyrannize over an object in their power...But are such characters and such situations usually met with?' Mrs. Cappe concluded, as had the Bristol committee, that girls should not be apprenticed, but should receive wages, however small, which would give them some independence and the freedom to move.³⁶

The Committee of Mayor and Aldermen also dealt with admissions. Printed forms were available, to be completed by the relatives or sponsors of the child. Addressed to the 'Right Worshipful, the Mayor, and the Worshipful, the Aldermen of the City of Bristol', the form included the date of birth or of baptism and the circumstances of the applicant. The one extant eighteenth-century application concerns 'Arabella Prother, aged

8 years or upwards, daughter of John Prother, a free burgess of the City.' She was the youngest of five orphans left entirely destitute. A note attached, dated 12 September, 1781, is addressed to Thomas Deane, the Treasurer and reads, 'Please to admit the within named Arabella Prother into the Red Maids' School.' Subsequently, Arabella's name appears on the list of girls admitted during that year. From 1743, the names of all the girls admitted to the school are recorded, at first in the proceedings of the committee, later in other school records. Only in more recent times is it possible to tell which girls are orphans.³⁷

At their meeting on Saturday, 28 March, 1772, the Mayor and Aldermen discussed the vacancies at the Red Maids' School and Queen Elizabeth's Hospital. For the Red Maids', it was decided that in future no girl should be admitted having any 'bodily Imperfection or Deformity.' They also reiterated the rules that entrants must not be younger than eight or older than ten and that they must be daughters of freemen of the City who had taken up the freedom before the birth of the daughter. The list of freemen was becoming increasingly exclusive and comprised only those who had been apprenticed for at least seven years in Bristol. 'Foreigners' wishing to set up a business in the City were required to pay very heavy fines.³⁸

There is no suggestion at Red Maids' in the eighteenth century of the serious problems of discipline or health experienced in many schools. It was a period of difficulty for both the public schools and the local grammar schools and there were many complaints of harsh discipline and lax morality. Eton and Winchester were notorious for insubordination and rioting and at Shrewsbury, numbers, which had reached 663 in the sixteenth century fell to twenty-six in the eighteenth. Colston's Boys' School in Bristol experienced serious insubordination between 1762 and 1800. Fourteen boys died and more than fifty were expelled, while others were removed by their friends to avoid the disgrace of expulsion. Boys were expelled for lying, theft, absconding and other misdemeanors. In 1785, five had conspired to cut off the Usher's hair, some had cut up coats and made them into trousers. Punishments could be very severe. In 1774, at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, a boy was whipped for theft, but there and at Red Maids' such incidents seem to have been rare. In February, 1752, Mrs. Becher informed the Mayor and Aldermen that some girls had recently stayed out at night without permission and 'in the company of a young Fellow under very Suspicious Circumstances.' The girls were questioned 'and heard as to what they could say for themselves.' Mary Patrick and Mary Williams, who had

entered the School in July 1743 and would be perhaps seventeen or eighteen by 1752, seem to have been ringleaders. The Mayor and Aldermen decreed that they should be 'publicly whipped in the School Room by the Scholars in such manner as Mrs. Becher shall direct and be afterwards dismissed from the Hospital for ever.'³⁹ The Edinburgh schools also had trouble with the older girls of seventeen and eighteen who resented the rules made for the younger children.

It may have been as a result of this unfortunate incident or some later troubles that the Mayoress and the Aldermen's ladies prepared a set of rules for the Hospital, which they laid before the Mayor and Aldermen on 3 February, 1758. That day, the Ladies were thanked for their work and 'for the trouble they have taken in looking into and representing the grievances relating to the Red Maids' School and for the Regulations they have prepared for the better order of the said School.' They were to review them in the light of suggestions then made by the Mayor and Aldermen. Mrs. Becher's position may even have been in doubt, for she was to continue 'as Mistress of the School for one year longer or during the pleasure of the Mayor and Aldermen.'⁴⁰

The revised rules were ready for the meeting of the committee on 3 July, 1758. The first group of rules concerned the Mistress. She was to have no more in family than herself and possibly a husband, and the Teacher. She was to control and organize the running of the Hospital, see that the rules were kept and teach the girls needlework and housewifery, providing them with needles, thread and thimbles for their work. She was forbidden to receive presents from the children's parents or friends and she must, 'By a Decent and proper Behaviour...give a good example to her scholars and...observe...Moderation and Temper in her Reproofs and corrections.' The Teacher was to work in the School room, preparing lessons and teaching the children, seeing they behaved well and used no bad language. Should the 'Visitors' not approve of the Teacher, she could be dismissed and another chosen. The Mistress and the Teacher were to catechise the girls every Sunday and accompany them to Church and see that they behaved well. Four of the older girls (over the age of twelve) were to act as servants in the House, two at a time for a fortnight in turn. These 'servants' would mend the other girls' clothes and one of the four had the duty of doing the errands for a week at a time.

The daily time-table was typical of most charity schools of the day. From Lady Day to Michaelmas the girls rose at six o'clock. The older girls made

the beds and dressed the little ones and all were to be in the school room by seven. The Mistress read prayers and then heard the girls read individually, the four 'servants' reading first, so that they might then go to prepare breakfast. By eight, all were to be at work in the school room, where they worked until twelve, but the Mistress might direct the older girls to teach the young ones to read. The children dined at one and the table must be properly laid with a cloth and knives and forks on meat days. The Mistress, who was to take her meals with them, was to see that grace was said before and after every meal, each girl taking her turn. No meat was to be prepared in the School.

Afternoon work began at two and ended at seven and supper followed. Prayers were at half-past eight and the girls went to bed at nine. In the winter they rose at seven, prayers began at eight and work at nine. The routine was the same, apparently, for the little ones of eight as it was for the young women of eighteen. During the winter they might dine in the kitchen with a fire, otherwise in one of the parlours without a fire. The children were to be allowed to play in the yard and Saturday afternoons were set aside for play, but no provision was made for regular exercise or walks in the fresh air. The girls must have clean underwear once a week, two clean aprons and one pocket handkerchief each week.

No girl was to be allowed outside the School without the leave of the Mistress, except on 'Holy days' which were to be three days at Christmas, two at Easter and two at Whitsuntide, but even on these days, the girls might first have to attend for a sermon or to learn a collect or psalm for the day. Any other holidays must be approved by the Mayoress. If any girl was allowed by the Mistress to visit friends, it must be after dinner and to return by night. No girl was to go out to work by the day.

The Mistress must keep the rules and must read them to the parents or friends of the girls, who must be told that any infringement would be severely punished. The Mayoress for the time being or, in her absence, the wife of the senior Alderman, was to visit the School as often as possible and to report any irregularity to the Mayor and Aldermen. A copy of the rules was to be hung in the School-room. Similar rules were made at this time for the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital.⁴¹

In a wooden box in the Bristol Record Office is a copy of these rules under the same date, but containing additional clauses, some of them crossed through. These include provision for a girl to leave at sixteen if a suitable place could be found for her; for the Mistress to pay any girl ½d. an

hour for any additional work, and a warning to the Mistress 'not to let any girl wear boddices that do not fit, as it is apprehended that Girls heretofore have been made crooked by that means.' Other clauses crossed through concerned punishments and the behaviour of the Mistress; for example, that she should guard against passion and not use or allow bad language, nor 'cast any reflections on their poverty nor on their parents.' If a girl was lazy and inattentive, she must work an hour in play-time and if a girl told lies she should go to bed without her supper. 'When a girl misbehaves so as to deserve whipping, the Mistress should do it when she is free from Passion, and first reason with and point out the consequences of the like misbehaviour, and when she has suffered for the fault, let it be forgot and the girl encouraged to do better.'

This manuscript may be the original paper submitted by the ladies, to which the Mayor and Aldermen 'made some amendments...which they hope will be to the Ladies Satisfaction.' Perhaps they thought that some of the advice to the Mistress was better communicated verbally and in private.⁴² Whipping was not unusual even in expensive schools such as Regent House at Bath, but, it seems that there they had other hated punishments. In a book published in 1870, a letter is printed from a lady of eighty-three to her grand-daughter in which she described the severe whipping meted out there in her school-days. As an alternative, the culprit was stripped of her clothes and dressed in the uniform of a charity school girl – a Red Maid, 'whose attire was composed entirely of scarlet serge with a white apron.' She describes the coarse stockings and stiff leather shoes, the 'gown, tippet and cap.' The poor girl, thus attired, attended all her usual classes and between classes, stood on a high stool in the public gaze. 'Anything more unbecoming or more uncomfortable could scarcely be imagined and there was hardly one of us that would not have preferred a flogging.'⁴³

Charity School food was, in general, simple and unappetizing and, in this, the Red Maids' School was little different from the Edinburgh schools, Christ's Hospital and Wesley's school at Kingswood. Breakfast consisted of bread with butter, bread with milk porridge or bread with broth. Dinner on Sunday was cold boiled beef; on Tuesday and Friday mutton, on Monday and Thursday cheese, and on Wednesday and Saturday broth. Each day there was six ounces of bread with the meat, except that when there were plenty of turnips and carrots in the broth they had only three ounces of bread. Supper consisted of six ounces of bread with cheese or butter. The girls had half a pint of beer with their meal when there was no milk or broth. It seems odd

to find no fish included in their menu and very few vegetables. The diet of the girls in the Edinburgh Schools was even less nutritious. Their historian comments that 'it was monotonous, limited and particularly lacking in fruit and vegetables.' They had porridge for both breakfast and supper and broth or bread and milk at mid-day. Coleridge, at Christ's Hospital from 1782 to 1791, was happy at Hertford where he had 'plenty to eat and drink, and pudding and vegetables almost every day.' However, in London, 'Our diet was very scanty. Every morning, a bit of dry bread and some bad small beer.' They had only very small portions and he concludes, 'Our appetites were *damped*, never satisfied; and we had no vegetables.'⁴⁴

Payments to the Charities proved inadequate during the last quarter of the century when the price of provisions rose considerably. In January 1773, and again in December of that year, the Treasurer of the Schools was ordered to pay the Mistress of the Red Maids' School and the Master of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital £42 each in addition to the usual payments, 'on account of the present high price of provisions,' the sums to be charged to the respective Charity funds.⁴⁵

On the 18 April, 1778, the Mayor reported that Mrs. Becher was 'desirous of resigning her office or Place of Mistress of the said Hospital.' Her resignation was unanimously accepted and her place declared vacant from the following midsummer. She had been at the School for more than thirty years and the Mayor proposed that an allowance of £20 a year should be paid her from the funds of Whitson's Charity. This was agreed and the meeting turned its attention to the applicants for the post. The petitions of Mary Smith, Mary Ward and Rose Cowie, 'severally praying to be elected to the said vacant office being read,' the question was put and 'all the Gentlemen being called, Rose Cowie was elected by a majority of those present.'⁴⁶

Mrs. Becher died two years later, so it may be that she had grown old and negligent, for Mrs. Cowie found a great deal to do at the Hospital. By 10 May, 1779, she had spent £22 19s. 10d. 'in papering some of the rooms of the said Hospital and for certain necessities for the use of the said Hospital.' The Mayor and Aldermen ordered that the bills be paid and agreed that the Hospital needed to be painted and white-washed. New beds, bedding and dormitory furniture were purchased, as well as some new Bibles, 'having the Psalms with the new version.' On 26 February, 1783, fifty pounds were to be paid her, 'as a compensation for her extraordinary trouble in cleansing the said Hospital when she went into the same and for the Expence she

sustained in and about furnishing medicine and other necessities for the purpose of removing and eradicating the Itch, which several of the scholars laboured under at that time.' The 'itch' and similar skin conditions and rashes seem to have been widespread in the Bristol schools and the boys at Colston's School and the children at the Corporation of the Poor also suffered from it. Possibly it originated in dirt and poor food and spread rapidly in the crowded and unhygienic conditions of the schools.⁴⁷

In the summer of 1778, Edmund Broderip took the place of Richard Edwards as the Red Maids' singing master. He was well known in Bristol as the organist at the Mayor's Chapel in College Green and had played a concerto on the organ at the opening of the New Assembly Rooms in Prince Street in 1756. Chatterton was uncomplimentary about both,

'A mean assembly room, absurdly built,

There in the dull solemnity of wigs

The dancing bears of commerce murder jigs

While Broderip's hum-drum symphony of flats

Rivals the harmony of midnight cats.'

Others appreciated his efforts, however, and, on 12 December, 1787, the Council ordered the Chamberlain to pay him twenty guineas 'for his great attention in teaching the children belonging to Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and the Red Maids' Hospital to sing at the same Chapel and for other services.'⁴⁸

Mrs. Rose Cowie resigned in March, 1792, after fourteen energetic years as Mistress, but Mrs. Ann Turner, who was chosen to succeed her, was obviously unhappy in the post and handed in her resignation in May. She left at midsummer when Mrs. Mary Morley was elected as the new Mistress. The feoffees met in 1790 to read a communication from the Vestry of St. Nicholas', reminding them that Whitson's monument, 'which was once elegant, now lies buried in oblivion and decaying in the Croud (crypt) under St. Nicholas' Church.' They suggested its removal to the wall under the Belfry at the West end of the Church where it would be seen. The expense of the removal was estimated at not more than seventy guineas. This proposal was greeted with enthusiasm and the work was set in hand. The following year the annual sermon was revived on 7 November,

preached that year by Dr. John Camplin, and the Feoffees, the Mistress and the children all attended.⁴⁹

In January 1785, Edward and Richard Parker, the Agents of the Charity, resigned and the Feoffees appointed Mr. Wintour Harris, deputy City Chamberlain as agent at a salary of £25 a year. At the audit that year, the total income from the estates for three years was £872 16s. 5½d. and some £4,000 was invested in the Chamber of Bristol, with interest due of £2,562 11s. 11d. After the audit of 1791, it was ordered that, for the future, the Agent should keep the accounts of the Charity in double entry in a set of books to be opened for the purpose. For the additional trouble that this entailed his salary was raised to £30 a year.

There was much criticism of the Hospital schools in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but the historian of Christ's Hospital points out that, 'during the long period when the numbers varied between forty and seventy, Christ's Hospital tended and clothed some thousands of girls whose parents or friends were not in a position to do so, and gave them an education such as otherwise they would never have received.' In a similar way, the Red Maids' School, by the end of the eighteenth century had cared for many girls in the century and a half of its existence and, in the 1790s began to prepare for the changes of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰

CHAPTER III

The School, 1791–1836

The new system of accounting has left a plethora of financial records for the period, 1791 to 1836. In the Receipt Books were pasted, with infinite care, every receipt, from rates, window tax and fire insurance to the payments to Mistresses, girls and tradesmen. The girls and their parents were usually able to sign their names for the £2 leaving payment, but Henry Sutton, who received £2 2s. 0d. a year for lighting and trimming a lamp at the school, was able only to make his mark on a scrap of paper with a 2d. stamp embossed on it.

The Agent kept a book concerning the lands, recording repairs, rents, fines, sales of timber, changes of tenant, payments to the gamekeeper and sales or purchases of land. The Receiver kept a Cash Book which summarised some of the annual payments. The gifts of Richard Hughes and Samuel Gist, which allowed four more girls to enter the school in the 1820s, are recorded here and the Receiver also notes the purchase of extra property in Denmark Street in 1825 and the acquisition of a new site for the Red Maids' School at the top of Park Street in 1835. Another Cash Book noted every item of expenditure for all of Whitson's charities. The Journals also record payments, sometimes with a little more detail and are beautifully set out. Finally, the Ledger analyses the accounts under individual headings, such as payments to each of the Mistresses, the costs of clothing, medicine, furniture, bedding, books, gratuities to the girls, receipts from the coal works at Sutton and the cost of the New Building to April, 1836.¹

There are also admission books, the Mayoresses' Book, committee minutes and letter books, and many vouchers and miscellaneous papers which make this period of the School's history exceptionally well documented. A large book, prepared in 1821 for the Charity Commissioners, details not only the current state of the school and its finances, but also includes carefully compiled copies of the important documents concerning the setting up of the school, such as the Trust Deed of 1622, Whitson's will and several later legal documents and land records.²

This book shows the income of the Charity in the year 1819–1820,

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| from Burnett, Chewton and Keynsham | £238 5s. 8d. |
| Dundry, Littleton and Chew Magna | £549 11s. 3½d. |
| Caswell Estate | £150 0s. 0d. |
| Houses in Bristol | £102 15s. 0d. |
| (None are let to Feoffees of the Charity) | <u>£1,040 11s. 11½d.</u> |
| an annuity from the Corporation | £58 8s. 0d. |
| Corporation bonds purchased during the eighteenth century, all converted in 1799 to 4% £4,000 | £160 0s. 0d. |
| In the Funds in the name of the Mayor and Corporation of Bristol £9,517 17s. 2d. | |
| 3% annual dividend | <u>£285 10s. 8d.</u> |
| TOTAL income of the Charity | <u>£1,828 15s. 3½d.</u> |

Cash investments £4,000 +£9, 518

The annual expenditure on the school and its property is also detailed,

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1819–1820 | |
| Country estates | £125 0s. 0d. |
| City estates (including the school) | £159 0s. 0d. |
| Mistress (£12 p.a. each girl) | £480 0s. 0d. |
| Beds, bedding, bonnets, shawls | £50 0s. 0d. |
| Medicines and attendance | £12 0s. 0d. |
| Books on average | £7 0s. 0d. |
| Writing master, instruction & implements | £22 9s. 0d. |
| Organist at Mayor's Chapel teaching singing | £5 5s. 0d. |
| allowance for clothes at entry and leaving | £18 0s. 0d. |
| one shilling to each girl on Founder's day | £2 0s. 0d. |
| average of funerals | £1 0s. 0d. |
| mourning when King died | £14 14s. 0d. |
| Gratuities on Founder's Day | £3 13s. 1d. |
| Hospitality | £38 0s. 0d. |
| Salaries of Officers | <u>£75 15s. 0d.</u> |
| TOTAL | <u>£460 11s. 2½d.</u> |

Balance in favour of the Charity 1820

£1,828 15s. 3½d.

£1,368 4s. 1d.

£460 11s. 2½d.

Surplus invested in the Funds.

The new system, begun in the 1790s, certainly analysed the accounts in detail, so that it was quite clear what money was available, how it was raised and how spent. The City accounting system had been similarly reformed from 1 October, 1785. Miss Livock comments of the new system that, 'It is hard to assess how useful it was as a means of efficient financial control.' On the death of a Chamberlain in 1815, there was a deficiency of £3,600 and the following Chamberlain was dismissed in 1822 for allowing his sister to collect rents in Portwall Lane belonging to Whitson's Charity. Audits were carried out by elected members of the Common Council and may have become something of a formality. Thomas Garrard was elected Chamberlain in May, 1823, and was said to have had a good record until 1856 when he embezzled £4,000 to help a relative in trouble. However, he was unable to pay to the Municipal Charity Trustees £3,000 belonging to Whitson's Charity of the money invested in Council funds in the eighteenth century. By that time, in 1836–40, the Council was very short of money, partly because of their former extravagance and partly because of the huge payment awarded by Chancery against the Council for some of the other charities.⁴

In the years 1792–95, it was decided that surplus income should be used to admit more children to the school. The case was put to the Recorder but the reply was unequivocal; the surplus must not be used for other purposes, nor, of their own authority should they apply the funds to increasing the number of children in the School. Where the surplus resulted from the enforced sale of houses for road widening in the City, 'the Feoffees ought to lay out the purchase money of the said houses in buying other lands which should be conveyed and settled to the like uses and trusts to which those houses were before subject.' It was possible to appeal to the Court of Chancery for a new Scheme for disposing of the surplus, or, if the Feoffees had already done so in a manner as near as possible to the original intent of the Founder, the Court would probably not interfere, 'but it is never advisable to deviate from the plan of the Founder without directions from the Court of Chancery.' Here the legal doctrine of *Cy Près*, generally

applied in such cases by the Courts of Equity, is clearly stated. The Feoffees, no doubt fearing the great expense and delay involved in an appeal to Chancery, accepted this advice, considered buying more houses in the town and doubled the weekly gifts to poor householders from Whitson's Charity. The interesting thing is that Whitson's will does allow for the possibility of a surplus and 'for the relief or maintenance of more other poore women children - ' whenever the annuity might permit. Instead, more lands were purchased at Dundry and Chew Magna, at the instance of the Surveyor, Mr. Sturge, who argued that they would consolidate the Charity's holdings in the area as well as themselves yielding at least 4%.⁵

The School building, as it had been since 1722, was described by Alderman Daniel for the Charity Commissioners on Thursday, 22 March, 1821. It was a large building, partly brick and partly stone, near the Mayor's Chapel in College Green. The largest room was the school-room, about thirty-two feet long and sixteen feet wide. The Mistress had two parlours on the ground floor and there was also a small room which was used for writing lessons. On the first floor, were two spacious dormitories and a bedroom for the Mistress. Outside, there was a large paved yard about ninety feet long and thirty feet wide for the children to play in and the Mistress had a garden about eighty feet in length and thirty-four feet wide. The roof was tiled and there were several chimneys to be swept each year.

Masons', carpenters' and painters' repair bills mention the cellars, a bath house, wash house and privies at the back, all white-washed. There were some leaded lights in the house and some sash windows, later fitted with canvas blinds. In the yard at the back were two pumps, one for rain water and one for spring water. The kitchen had a big, black-leaded fire grate, with polished fire irons and bright iron fire guard. The Mistress had the elegant small fire place from Whitson's house in St. Nicholas Street, and the large chimney piece with his coat of arms, was in the girls' dining room. All the rooms had white plastered ceilings and coloured walls. In the summer of 1824, William Edkins, the painter, started his work by mending the ceilings and the skirting boards, then white-limed the cellars and outside buildings. Next came the whitening of the ceilings indoors and the walls of dormitories, staircase, schoolroom, writing room, parlour and kitchen. This was followed by a yellow wash and then two coats of oil paint. One year there was stone coloured paint for the staircase and passage, the kitchen and three other rooms, but one room was decorated in orange, with a mahogany colour for the two window seats. The Mistress's rooms had bell-pulls so that

she could summon the duty girls and the school room had a clock and a copy of the rules, framed and glazed. The Founder's portrait, repaired and fresh varnished in 1816, also hung in the school.⁶

It seems as though Mistresses appointed to the school either resigned very quickly or set about managing the place with energy and enthusiasm and then stayed for many years. Sometimes they stayed too long and became lethargic or ill, allowed things to become slack and had to be forced to leave. Mrs. Morley was at the school for seventeen years, during which time costs rose at an unprecedented rate, mainly as a result of some poor harvests and the long wars with the French. Mrs. Cowie, in her term as Mistress, had already found £7 a year for each girl inadequate and, at their meeting on Monday, 12 January, 1795, the feoffees considered a petition from Mrs. Morley. She had been Mistress of the Hospital for more than two years and was now forced to point out that the rising cost of provisions made the allowance no longer sufficient. The girls' work, 'formerly very advantageous,' was much reduced and she could prove that she had 'sustained a very considerable loss since her appointment.' The allowance for each girl was raised to £8 a year and the Agent was to pay Mrs. Morley £42 to compensate for her losses before that date. In each of the following years, Mrs. Morley was allowed an extra £42 until, in June 1801, she was paid £84, 'in consequence of the present extraordinary and unprecedented high price of provisions.' The succeeding year she received an extra payment of £70, because prices remained unusually high and she had the additional expense 'of fire and candles for the use of the girls learning to write.'⁷ By July, 1805, Mrs. Morley had become old and sick and the Mayor and Aldermen asked the Treasurer, Alderman Bengough, and the Mayoress 'to make such arrangements – as to induce her to resign on account of ill health and inability to discharge the duties of her office.' Mrs. Morley agreed and submitted her written resignation and was granted a pension of £30 a year from the funds of the Charity, which she enjoyed until her death in 1814.⁸

Her successor, Mrs. Ann Sharp, seems to have been an unfortunate choice, being quite unable to maintain discipline in the school. On Saturday, 17 February, 1806, a special meeting of the Mayor and Aldermen was convened 'to consider of the conduct of the Mistress and Children belonging to the Red Maids' Hospital,' Mrs. Sharp attended the meeting and offered to resign as soon as the Mayor and Aldermen could appoint a successor. Two of the older girls, who had been particularly insubordinate, Harriet Pyer and Jane Guy, were to be separated from the others, 'and kept

by the Mistress in separate apartments; and that they have sufficient Food and other necessities, but different from the rest of the children, until such time as the Governors of the said Hospital shall order otherwise.' At the beginning of March, 1806, Mrs. Ann Gwyer, widow, was appointed Mistress for one year but, less than a month later, she tendered her resignation and Mrs. Mary Ann Bryant was appointed in her place.⁹

Mrs. Bryant stayed for more than fifteen years and was highly regarded by the governors and by successive Mayoresses. Costs, particularly food prices, continued to rise and the capitation allowance was again raised to £11 for each girl in 1806 and to £12 in 1813. In addition, she was allowed an extra £60 in 1810 and £40 in 1813 because of the unusually high price of bread; Mrs. Claxton saying that Mrs. Bryant 'was worth any indulgence the Feoffees might wish to show her.'¹⁰

Mrs Bryant was still at the school in 1821 at the time of the visit of the Charity Commissioners. In reply to their questions, she informed them that she had been at the school for fifteen years and that it was always kept to its full complement of scholars, at that time forty-one. Her allowance in 1821 was still £12 for each girl, from which she had to provide their board, bed linen and clothes, except bonnets, shawls and muslin handkerchiefs which were provided by the Trustees. The children had new outfits every three years, with always three sets of clothes in use; one for Sundays, one for Holy-days and one to wear in the house. They wore red cloth gowns of a fixed pattern which was never changed and they had a new pair of shoes and stockings each year. Their linen was laundered once a week. The Governors paid her £2 for fitting out each child on entry and another £2 to be given to the parents or friends of each girl on leaving, to buy clothes, provided that the school dress was left with the Mistress. There was no allowance for household expenses except for the proceeds of the girls' needlework. She provided a Teacher, the food and household goods and the needles, thimbles and thread for the girls' work. The Governors supplied books and furniture, except the furniture in her rooms which was her own. She described the rules and the time-table of daily activities, adding that the work usually finished at five, rather than at seven in the evening, so that the girls had time to play. She said that the work, which was only plain sewing, such as making shirts, darning and mending linen, had been slack for the past two years. She kept no accounts and did not know how much she received each year, she thought she might make, 'taking one with another, about £100.'¹¹

In September, 1821, Mrs. Bryant resigned and was awarded an annuity of £30, which she received quarterly until her death in 1828. The post was advertized and two candidates were interviewed, Phoebe Millard, widow, and Elizabeth Davis, spinster. Their applications were read and considered and Miss Davis, with her neat, careful handwriting, was appointed. She seems to have been reasonably successful and had only one serious discipline problem to deal with. She died in an epidemic at the school in June 1828 and Elizabeth Empson, who had taught in the school for many years, was chosen from four candidates to succeed her.¹²

The school admission books from the 1780s to 1836 give the details of each girl; her full name, the date of admission, the date of birth or baptism, and the date when she might be expected to leave (usually eighteen years from the date of birth). The actual date of leaving was also entered and often the cause if the girl left early. In her evidence to the Charity Commission, Mrs. Bryant deplored the rule which kept the older girls so long in the school. 'Their age is ascertained by and reckoned from their Baptism, which is rather an uncertain criterion, as the Children of persons low in life are often baptised at one or even two years old, and as they are suffered to remain till eighteen, I find from this wrong reckoning that they are sometimes too old to be at my school. They are more difficult to be brought within discipline, and they are apt to corrupt the younger ones if not very much watched. They are apt to be forward in their answers to me, which is a bad example to the younger children.'

It is possible that many of the discipline problems which troubled the school from time to time, arose from the boredom and discontent of girls over eighteen, confined to school and treated as children when they were old enough to be independent, working or even married. Since they felt unable to depart from the Founder's instructions without the permission of the Chancery Court, the Mayor and Aldermen finally resolved that preference should be given to candidates who could produce certificates to show that they had been baptised 'within two years after their respective births.' At least there would be no young ladies of over twenty in the school.¹³

Of girls who left before the due date, during the decade 1789-99, three absconded, one was expelled, two left early with permission and four died. From 1800 to 1809, four more girls died and between 1810 and 1819, two died and one left early. The 1820s were troubled years. In March, 1821, Sarah Brookman died and then, on Christmas Eve that year, Mary Ann Garraway was killed in the passage-way leading to the school. Six girls were expelled

for ill-health, mainly in 1827–8, and four were expelled for bad behaviour; Maria Fowler and Harriet Amelia Prigg in November, 1824, and Charlotte Whitterd and Elizabeth Russell in January, 1829. During the period 1830–1839, the records are not quite complete, but two girls are known to have died, two girls were expelled and one was dismissed for ill health. Over-all, it was not a bad record for a town charity school in a half-century which saw many years of war and high prices, the increasing industrialization of the City, the severe local riots of 1831 and a serious cholera epidemic which killed so many of the children in the Bristol Corporation of the Poor.¹⁴

Petitions for admission to the school in the early nineteenth century included a declaration that the child had already had measles, smallpox and other diseases then prevalent among children and there was still a rule that no child who suffered from any handicap or deformity could be admitted. The age of the child must be stated and a child could be removed if it later transpired that she had been over ten years of age. The father's trade must be shown and the date when he had taken up his freedom. The family circumstances must be detailed and their address noted, and there must be a list of the signatures of respectable people supporting the application, usually including the local clergy and church wardens.

Five of these petitions remain for the years 1815 and 1816. Mary Ann Vicary's father, an accountant, had died, leaving a widow, a cripple, and three children, 'in very distressed circumstances.' The family lived in Barton Court, behind the 'Full Moon,' in Stokes Croft. William Ferris, the father of another Mary Ann, was an invalid and incapable of supporting his wife and nine children. Caroline Moore's father was a glass-cutter, with a wife and seven children dependent on him 'for support and education.' Catherine Meredith was the daughter of James and Sarah Meredith, who had four other children. James, a tailor, had been 'deprived of sight upwards of six years,' and the family was dependent on the mother's work for support, except for 'a small parochial allowance.' This family lived at 14, Barton Street, St. Pauls. The fifth petition was on behalf of Betty Bishop, an orphan, and came from the girl's grandmother, Betty Palmer, who was sixty-eight and lived in an almshouse, 'nearly opposite the Iron Bridge at the bottom of Redcliffe Hill.' Her daughter had 'died in great distress about a year ago leaving two orphans.' Not only was there a record of the child's baptism at Redcliffe Church, but Mr. Danvers Ward, a surgeon, had sent a copy of the entry in his 'Book of Midwifery Patients delivered – 1807, January 13, Mrs. Bishop, Delivered of a Daughter.' This petition was supported also by the

Vicar and Church Wardens of Redcliffe and eleven other people. All five of these girls entered the school and remained there until they were eighteen, leaving in 1824 and 1825.

These all seem to have been deserving cases, and from such evidence as remains, there is no reason to suppose that the Mayor and Aldermen favoured their own political supporters or their employees in allotting places in the charity schools. On the other hand, they did reserve all power to themselves and the Mayoress was allowed to nominate one girl during her term of office, so that it is not surprising that sometimes the suspicion of corruption should arise. Once the admissions were approved, the Treasurer sent a certificate to the Mistress. One of these remains in the records, signed by Alderman Bengough on the 21 December, 1810, when Jane Churchman, aged nine, the daughter of a potter, and Mary Ann Thomas, aged eight, the daughter of a tailor, were 'ordered to be admitted to the Red Maids' School.' Both these girls remained in the school until they were eighteen.¹⁵

Inside the cover of one of the admission books is a copy of a printed form headed 'Regulations to be observed by the Children admitted to the Red Maids' School and to which they are required strictly to conform.' These were the rules that the parents needed to know. On entry each child was to be provided with six coarse towels, a small- and a large-tooth comb, and a comb brush; a knife, fork and spoon; a tooth brush and a deal box in which to keep her things. Parents were only to visit the girls on Saturday afternoons except in cases of illness, though rules about visiting varied from time to time. Any child allowed to go home must have a ticket signed by the Mistress and these tickets must be returned to the Mistress by the Parents. Another, later, note about admissions gives a much longer list of things to be provided by the parents, including a tin basin for broth and a blue and white cup for breakfast; a nail brush and a set of shoe brushes as well as the hair brushes and tooth brush. By 1830, the parents seem to have provided the girls' underwear, consisting of two shifts, two flannel petticoats, a pair of blue worsted stockings, two night caps, two pockets, four handkerchiefs, a pair of shoes, and a pair of stays was optional. It was also optional to the parent to provide the Holy-day clothes of two caps, a coloured shawl, two white aprons, two tippets and two pairs of white gloves. This long and expensive list would have caused despair in many poor households and is not mentioned in any other records so perhaps it was only a suggestion which was never put into practice.¹⁶

The Ledger shows that bonnets, shawls and muslin handkerchiefs were purchased by the Treasurer most years and some of the tradesmen's bills still remain. In 1814 and 1815, George Thwaites, Linen Draper of 49, Wine Street, provided thirty shawls and thirty-two muslin handkerchiefs for the School for a total cost of £2 2s. 8d.¹⁷

In September, 1799, the rules of the school were read and confirmed by a new group of feoffees and the diet list was also approved. In 1802 the Mayoress, Mrs. Claxton, whose duty it was to visit the school, took a great personal interest in the girls and, at the end of the year, the Mayor and Aldermen passed a vote of thanks to her, 'for her great and continued care and unwearied attention to the health, morals and instruction of the Girls in the Red Maids' School and that the Treasurer be requested to carry those thanks to Mrs. Claxton in the most handsome manner he can.'¹⁸

There were occasional problems of discipline. In January, 1804, the Mayor and Aldermen agreed to meet at the school 'to consider a complaint made against some of the girls in the said Hospital.' There is no further report, however, and no girl was expelled, but Mrs. Morley was growing old and sick, so possibly the job was already too much for her. The Mayoress for the year 1804 to 1805, Mrs. Protheroe, was thanked by the committee of Mayor and Aldermen for 'the great care and pains' she had taken, 'in the superintendence of the Red Maids' Hospital and for the information she has given to the Mayor and Aldermen by the letter now produced.' The contents of the letter were not reported but, again, this was just before Mrs. Morley's retirement.

Mrs. Claxton continued to visit the school frequently and it was just as well that she approved of Mrs. Bryant, for her manner was somewhat imperious. In her notes for the Treasurer, recommending leaving payments to the girls it was, 'You will pay —,' or 'You will let Mrs. Bryant have —.' On 18 May, 1811, she demanded from the Agent, Mr. Wintour Harris, 'an account of the medicines used by the Red Maids for the last five or six years,' which he sent her on the same day. Then, on the 21st she asked for an account for the twelve years before that, explaining that Dr. Lovell was leaving the School and 'I am about engaging someone else.' Mr. Harris was obliged to reply that he had no earlier accounts for medicines as, before 1800, they had been paid for by the Mistress.¹⁹

Busy-body she might be, but the girls must often have been glad of her intervention on their behalf. There is among the records a delightful letter from one of the girls, Jemima Vigor King, to Mrs. Claxton with all

the details and certificates of her marriage and a testimonial to the good character of her new husband. Jemima was at the school from December 1816 to June 1826, and seems to have kept in touch with Mrs. Claxton, who obtained the £10 marriage portion for her.

Wendaresday, june 22nd 1831

Worthy Madam,

Agreeable to your kind desire I send you the certificate of my marriage which was solemniz'd on the day stated and I am happy to say that my husband is a kind and affectionate young man and I hope deserving of your worthy favour and he as well as myself return our grateful thanks to you for your very great kindness which you have shown towards us and also to the worthy Corporation of Bristol and hope that we shall continue to merit your favour for many years. As you were so kind as to fear my getting cold on my journey I take the liberty to inform you that I had a very unpleasant journey of Thunder Lightning and Rain and I was very wet indeed yet I did not get cold and I am quite well. Madam on the certificate they have put both of this parish. They did not ask me and I did not tell them as they woud have charged double fee. I humbly beg pardon for the Ignorant Style in which I have written but I trust your kindness will forgive all defects.

From your humble
and most obedient Servant
Jemima Hutchinson.

Please direct – 9, Caroline Street, Grays Walk, Lambeth, London.

Jemima's letter shows every sign of having been written in haste and is almost completely devoid of punctuation, but the writing is fairly neat and completely legible and there are few mistakes of spelling or grammar. She had certainly been quite well taught in reading, writing and the use of English.²⁰

From 1824 to 1836, successive Mayoresses recorded their comments on the state of the school in a special book. The length and number of the entries obviously vary each year with the interest of these ladies and the

Wednesday June 29th 1831

Worthy Madam

Agreeable to your ^{kind} desire I send
you the certificate of my marriage
which was solemnized on the day stated
and I am happy to say that my husband
is a kind and affectionate young man, and
I hope deserving of your worthy favour
and he as well as myself wishes to own
grateful thanks to you for your very
great kindness which you have shown towards
us and also to the worthy Corporation
of Bristol. and hopes that we shall
continue to merit your favour for many
years as you were so kind as to
pardon my getting cold on my journey I
take the liberty to inform you that I

The first page of Jemima King's letter, 1831

situation they found at the school. The first section of the book contains notes about individual girls. The main offence was staying out late on a holiday and, for this, six girls were punished by having to stay in the school during the next two holidays. One girl did not return at all and the mother sent back her uniform clothes. The Mistress blamed the mother for wanting the child to help at home and said she had always been a good girl in school. When another girl stayed away all night, Alderman Daniel summoned her parents to the Council House for an explanation. The marriage of Jemima King is among those noted here and the grant to her of the marriage portion, 'as bearing an excellent character.'

The final section of the book consists of the Mayoresses' reports. In May, 1824, Mrs. Barrow was glad to hear from 'Mistress Davis' that 'the general conduct of the Red Maids is much better than from her last report of March and April. In June and July also there were no complaints. She and the Chaplain and 'many other persons attending the Mayors Chappel' had also commented on the improved behaviour of the Red Maids during Divine Service. However, by the autumn, the Mayoress 'was sorry to observe that in this month there have been many complaints of disobedience of some of the Elder girls to the Mistress.' That year, two girls were expelled for staying at home without leave and this decision of the Governors was read to the rest of the school in the school room.²¹

On 17 November, 1828, the Treasurer reported a very serious breach of discipline. It seemed that Robert Coleman, the Sheriff's yeoman, and William Barnell, the Mayor's Marshal, and another of the yeomen, had taken several of the Red Maids into a shop in the city, plied them with liquor and 'taken improper liberties with them.' The girls were questioned, as were the men involved, and their statements were read at another meeting of the Mayor and Aldermen on 29 November. The following Wednesday, the committee met again and the statements were again studied and discussed. It was decided that the three men should be suspended from their duties, and at a further meeting on 8 December, it was agreed that the complaints against Coleman and Barnell had been substantiated and that they should be dismissed. The other man, Henry Jew, was to remain suspended until his part in the affair could be determined. By this time, the story had reached the newspapers and James Acland in *The Bristolian* of 20 December, 1828, asked why legal proceedings had not been taken against the Corporation Officers who had sexually violated the Red Maids. The school records are silent about this episode. Elizabeth Davis, the Mistress, had died in June, 1828, and Elizabeth Empson, who

took her place, though she had taught in the school for many years, was not a good disciplinarian. The names of the girls were not given, but two girls were dismissed 'for bad behaviour,' in January, 1829, and others 'for ill-health,' about that time, with no precise date given.²²

Autumn 1830 brought a new problem. Anne Golledge did not return to school on Saturday evening and was not heard of until Monday morning. On Tuesday, the Mayoress, Mrs. Rachel Savage, brought the girl back to school, and the following day, the Treasurer, Alderman Daniel, and the Chamberlain, Thomas Garrard, visited the school to talk to her. The girl was not at all penitent but was 'behaving with pride and impertinence,' so they ordered that she be separated from the others. Throughout November and December she remained recalcitrant, in spite of her isolation and the Black Cap she was made to wear. On 20 December, the Mayoress visited the school again and found her 'seeming alive to her faults' and begging for forgiveness and so removed the Black Cap and ordered her to be placed on work about the house and to have no Christmas Holiday. By the New Year, however, she was again causing trouble and the Mayoress invited her, with her friend, Mary Nelson, to come to the Mansion House the next day. Her behaviour did not improve and, on 24 February, the Mayoress 'observed with sorrow that Anne Golledge's conduct was most insubordinate and confirmed her opinion that she should have been expelled when she ran away.'

The Mayor and Aldermen had already determined on expulsion on 8 February and Thomas Garrard had the task of writing to Anne's mother, who was in service at Kempsey, near Worcester, to tell her that the girl's conduct had been so bad as to make expulsion inevitable and to ask into whose care her daughter should be committed. Anne's friend, Mary Nelson, had 'borne her punishment humbly and seeming very penitent for her fault, the Mayoress removed the Black Cap in the presence of the whole school.' It is significant that throughout this period there is no mention by the Mayoress of the attitude or the actions of the Mistress, Elizabeth Empson. At the end of her year in office, Mrs. Savage, after praising the conduct of all the other girls, added, 'There is a great want of neatness and regularity in the school which the Mayoress hopes, by a more strict attention on the part of the Mistress and the Teacher will be improved. A Dial having been obtained for the school room, there will be no excuse for any deviation from the general rules.'²³

Mrs. Savage particularly approved the rule against parents visiting the girls, since they often brought 'trash' and even quack medicines. She was

sorry to observe that the intention of the Founder 'that the girls should be brought up for service,' was being frustrated. Of the six girls who had left during the year, only one was in service, 'neither would she have been had I not taken her myself.' It seemed that it was 'pride and selfwill' which made the girls determine 'on having their own way. Consequently, they take in work or go out daily, which is to be regretted.' It may also have been that girls who had lived in an institution for ten years preferred to seek some independence and, perhaps, a normal home life.

The following year, 1831–32, Mrs. Pinney praised the girls' conduct and was glad that their health had remained good during the cholera epidemic. She regretted that she had not visited as often as she would have liked and suggested setting up a committee of ladies, with the Mayoress as President, 'so that the interest once excited may be fostered by a continuance in the same hands, which cannot be expected while the charge is every year transferred from one to another.' This was a good idea but there is no evidence that it was put into practice. Mrs. Elizabeth Stanton and Mrs. Mary Ann Walmer, in the following years, wrote mainly good reports. Mrs. Walmer found one girl in disgrace, lectured her thoroughly and, when she promised to be good, removed the Black Cap. On 29 June, 1834, she attended evening prayers and was very pleased with the conduct of the girls so, on 9 July, 'the girls all drank tea at the Mansion House.'

Mrs. Albinia Payne, the last Mayoress to visit the school under this system, seems to have been very conscientious, visiting regularly each month; inspecting the food, going all over the apartments and inspecting the girls' lessons and their needlework, both of which she considered satisfactory. She disapproved of the girls sleeping in blankets and recommended new bed linen and long lists of household goods were purchased in 1835, perhaps on her orders or in anticipation of a move from the old building. The list included beds, blankets and bolsters, counterpanes, and sheets and bolster cases which the girls would make. Thirty suits of clothes were also to be ordered for the children, each suit consisting of a coarse apron and a check apron, a day cap and a night cap, a gown, a shift, a flannel petticoat, a pair of stockings, a pair of shoes, a white tippet and a red cloth tippet. Mrs. Payne also ordered the doctor for a child who was sick and dealt with a naughty girl who was not allowed to go with the others to the Mansion House for tea. On the last visit, in December, 1835, she heard the girls read and then gave each girl a Christmas gift, as she had done also the previous year.²⁴

Well might Mrs. Claxton enquire into the amount of medicine consumed in the school. There were times between 1800 and 1836 that, as someone has more recently phrased it 'a veritable Niagara' of medicine was poured down their throats, which kept the apothecary busy. In the eighteenth century, the Mistress had been entirely responsible for the children's health but, in 1797, the Mayor reported that he thought the girls' recovery might be more speedy 'if medicines were to be administered under the direction of some able physician.' He had mentioned it to Dr. Lovell, who had immediately offered his services, 'in the most polite manner, provided the Feoffeees would consent thereto without his accepting any gratuity, fee or reward for the same.' Mrs. Morley was told by Mr. Harris, the Agent, that she should call Dr. Lovell when any of the children were ill and that his prescriptions were to be sent to Mr. Alexander Shedden, the druggist and apothecary in Union Street and Mr. Shedden had been told to charge them to the Charity. The person taking the prescription should wait to take back the medicine and all 'Phyals and Gallipots' must be returned to Mr. Shedden immediately the medicines had been taken in order to make the expense as little as possible. The annual payments to the apothecaries, Alexander Shedden and, later, William Fry and Joseph and William Maurice, rose from £2 10s. 0d. in 1802 to over £15 after 1813 and £32 5s. 0d. for the year and a half from spring 1823 to autumn 1824. From 1828 to 1836, William Maurice received a standard £15 a year, 'for medicine and medical attendance.' The rise in payments may be mainly the result of inflation but it may also reflect some deterioration in the children's health because of the increasing industry in the centre of the City and the pollution of the nearby River Frome.²⁵

Several of the accounts sent by Joseph and William Maurice have survived and make an interesting contrast with the earlier account of 1730. Cough mixtures, aperients and magnesia, mixtures for fevers, a large quantity of ointment and lotion for chilblains, 'bug mixture,' liniment and often gargle for Mrs. Bryant in the winter time were all frequently supplied. In January 1816, Joseph Maurice sent a quart of castor oil; in June, the bug mixture; in August, he was at the school most days with powders and pills; for one girl six leeches, then four leeches, and later 'syrup of poppies,' In April 1816 there is a bill for a guinea for 'surgical attendance...on Stephens.' As both girls of that name survived to leave in 1821 and 1822, this was presumably successful. He charged 2s. 6d. for drawing teeth and, in 1823, 3s. 6d. for 'opening the jugular vein for Maria Fowler,' who was probably suffering from some kind of fever and who obviously recovered, since she

was expelled the following year at the age of thirteen after five years in the school. The names of the girls treated are only occasionally recorded and it has not proved possible to link treatments with known deaths nor to identify particular epidemic diseases in the school until the influenza epidemic of 1828. During the period 1780 to 1840, fourteen deaths were recorded in the registers and nine girls were dismissed for ill health, no particular disease being mentioned. In 1820 the feoffees ordered that 'no girl should be admitted until the Medical Man of the Establishment shall certify that she is in a sound state of health.' Parents were, of course, allowed to visit their children when they were sick.²⁶ The precautions taken at the school when the cholera epidemic reached Bristol in July 1832, were extensive and cost the Charity a total of £327 12s. 10d. for the installation of cisterns and baths and the purchase of chloride of lime. Extra meat was also provided for the children, 'during the raging of the Cholera.' Thus the Red Maids' School did not suffer the dreadful death toll of the children of the poor house at St. Peter's Hospital where 168 of the first 261 cases occurred. Overall there were 1,521 cases in the City and 584 deaths, but none at the school.²⁷

The 1790s saw changes, not only in the management of the school, but also in the education of the girls. On Monday, 19 November, 1798, the Feoffees determined that, 'having taken into consideration that, although it might not have been necessary at the time of the death of the late Alderman Whitson for the female children educated in the school endowed by him to have been taught to write, yet we, having weighed and considered the alteration of times and circumstances, are of the opinion that it will be greatly conducive to their usefulness in life for the children in his school to be able to write and (to be) conversant with the first four rules of arithmetic.' The ten senior girls (soon changed to twelve) were to be taught for two hours on each of two days in the week and in the presence of the Mistress or the Teacher 'by a proper master to write a plain legible hand and the first Four Rules of Arithmetic.' The master's salary and all other expenses would be paid from the funds of the Charity. In January, 1799, Thomas Empson, an accountant, was appointed to teach the girls at a salary of £15 a year. Some of Thomas Empson's accounts, beautifully written, still survive. One dated 1815 is for teaching the twelve senior girls for half a year £9 and for 'writing and cyphering books, slates, pens and pencils and ink £2 4s. 6d.' to a total of £11 4s. 6d. This was his usual half-yearly payment. Thomas Empson taught in the school until 1820 when his place was taken by Elizabeth, probably his daughter.²⁸

Robert Broderip, the organist of the Mayor's Chapel, continued to teach the girls singing until his death in 1808, when his place was taken by Cornelius Bryan, who was followed by Cornelius Bryan junior. For much of this period the girls were taught Scripture and the Catechism by the Mayor's Chaplain, the Rev. Charles Bullock, who had been a Bristol Grammar School boy and a Whitson Exhibitioner at Queen's College, Oxford. He came to the school voluntarily until, in 1821, the Charity Commissioners suggested that he should come regularly and should be paid. This provoked from him a letter reminiscent of Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Clifton Woods
Sept. 28th, 1821.

Gentlemen,

I beg, most respectfully to offer you my sincere thanks for your late liberal donative, as also for the appointment to which you have been please(d) to nominate me in the red maids' school. These united testimonies of your approbation are, I assure you, gentlemen, peculiarly gratifying to my feelings; and I have only to hope that I may be enabled to further your benevolent intentions, by impressing on the minds of the young persons committed to my charge the necessity and advantages of a strict adherence to their moral and religious duties.

I Have the honor to be, gentlemen,
Yr. obliged and very faithful
humble servant
Chas. P. Bullock
Chaplain to the Mayor.

To the
Rt. Worshipful
The Mayor and Aldermen.²⁹

More books were purchased. In 1806, the Treasurer paid for twenty *Bibles* and twenty *Books of Common Prayer*. John Emery supplied copies of *Preparatory Tracts* and *Village Sermons* which were much used for the teaching of reading. Mrs. Bryant told the Charity Commissioners in 1821

that, each morning after Prayers, the children were taught reading and spelling on alternate days.

'They read sometimes in the Bible, sometimes *Village Sermons* and *Tracts*, then the children go to play till breakfast time.' Asked whether she used the monitorial system as in the National Schools, Mrs. Bryant replied that she did not, except that she sometimes used the senior girls to teach the younger ones. *Universal Spelling Books*, *Tracts*, and *Service Books* were frequent purchases and the tradition may already have begun of giving Bibles to the girls on leaving. Copies of Isaac Watts' *Hymns* and of *The Faith and Duty of a Christian Man* by Francis Gastrell, Bishop of Chester, with sets of twelve or twenty-five of other similar religious texts were bought for the school.

Mrs. Savage presented the school with some books during her year as Mayoress in 1830–31 and it may be that the feoffees were trying to build up a small library for the girls. On a page near the back of one of the admission books there is 'A List of the Books purchased by the Trustees for the use of the Red Maids' School.' It is an interesting list—

George Horne, Bishop of Norwich, *A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (1776) (Author unknown). *A History of Insects* 2 vols.

C. C. Sturm, *Reflections on the Works of God in Nature and Providence for every Day in the Year* 4 vols. (possibly an edition printed in Bristol in 1801 by R. Edwards)

Aesop's *Fables*

Dr. John Aikin, *Evenings at Home; or the Juvenile Budget opened, Consisting of a Variety of Miscellaneous pieces for the Instruction and amusement of Young Persons* 6 vols. (1792–6)

William Gurney, *A Handy Dictionary of the Bible*

Rev. Thomas Gallaudet, *The History of Joseph*

The History of Jonah for Children

J. Taylor, *The Wonders of Nature*

Rev. H. Martindale, *The Calendar of Popular Customs*

Defoe, *The Life and Strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*

(Author unknown) *The Library of Entertaining Knowledge*

John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*

Harry Sandford, *The History of Sandford and Merton, a work intended for the use of Children* 3 vols. (1783–89)

Hawkesworth (ed.) *Cook's Voyages round the World*

Not all these works can be positively identified, but it is a varied collection and mostly consists of works specifically written for young people.

Apart from the annual holidays of three days at Christmas, two at Easter and two at Whitsuntide, the children had few special days to enjoy. There were times when they could visit their homes and, about once a year, the Mayoress might invite them to drink tea at the Mansion House. A local funeral or a Royal anniversary might vary the monotony a little. The fiftieth anniversary of the Coronation of George III saw great celebrations in Bristol. The Corporation went in procession to the Mayor's Chapel on College Green, with the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and the Red Maids attending them. After the service, they all returned to the Mayor's house and were each given a slice of cake, a glass of wine and a new sixpence, and that evening, a great bonfire was lit on Brandon Hill. There were similar festivities for the Coronations of George IV and William IV, when the girls were given a coronation medal, a shilling and a cake each. In 1818, the girls were in black crepe for the death of Alderman Bengough, the Treasurer of the School and, at the death of Queen Charlotte, the girls had dark silk shawls and handkerchiefs and black gloves, while the two Mistresses went into full mourning.

The celebration of Founder's Day on or near 19 November, each year became more elaborate. The sermons, for which Whitson had made provision, but which had lapsed during the eighteenth century, were revived and the books show regular annual payments from the 1790s to the preacher and to the Sexton, the Clerk and the ringers of St. Nicholas'; by 1814 the routine was established. First, the Feoffees gathered at the Tolzey for the formalities of the Audit and the reading of the relevant parts of John Whitson's will. As it was November and the mornings cold, Hannah Frankland, the keeper of the Tolzey, served them chocolate, for which she was paid 10s 6d. They then went to St. Nicholas' Church, where the Red Maids and the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital were waiting. In 1814, the preacher was the Rev. John Eden, the Vicar of St. Nicholas'. After the service, some of the Feoffees accompanied the girls back to the school and each girl was given a shilling and the Mistress five shillings. By the 1830s a special dinner was prepared for the girls and the whole day was a holiday.

The Feoffees held a dinner later in the day for all those connected with the school. The cost of this feast rose from £18 18s. 0d. in 1802 to £46 10s. 0d. in 1833 when printed invitations were sent out to over forty people. This was much criticised at the time as a misuse of Charity funds, but most of the people

present gave their services to the school and this was, in part, a recognition of that. The two hundredth anniversary of the school's foundation in 1834 was celebrated with a ceremonial dinner at the Montague Tavern.

The memory of John Whitson was also kept alive during these years by the cleaning, repair and varnishing of his portrait in the school. Another portrait was discovered in 1816 in Whitson's old house in St. Nicholas Street and this was sent to Nathaniel Stephens, a carver and gilder, who made a new frame and paid an artist to repair the portrait. In 1820, the Bristol surgeon, Richard Smith and his brother Henry, descendants of the Whitson family, presented to the Charity the Founder's gloves and ring and a suitable box was purchased for 6s. 6d. to keep them safely. In the 1820s, the Founder's monument at St. Nicholas' was repaired and a new figure of the Founder in his magisterial robes was placed on the monument and the existing figure moved to the Crypt. The Feoffees also printed a new edition of Whitson's *Pious Meditation* with engravings of the tomb and the portrait.³³

The early nineteenth century saw a series of radical attacks on the endowed schools many of which were in decay, and public notice was aroused by articles in the *Edinburgh* and *Westminster Reviews* and by Carlisle's *Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools* (1818). At the same time, the misuse of many of Bristol's ancient charities was brought to light in a pamphlet by J. Cranidge, 'A Mirror for the Burgesses and Commonalty of Bristol.' It was Henry Brougham who brought the matter to Parliament in 1816 and, as a result, a Parliamentary Commission was set up to visit the schools. It is probable that the girls knew little of the visit of the Charity Commissioners to Bristol in 1821. It fell to the Treasurer and the City Chamberlain to see that all the required information was available to them and a large book was prepared which detailed the full history of the Charity, with the Will and many of the early legal documents copied in full and an account of the financial dealings and property. Alderman Daniel's report and Mrs. Bryant's answers to the Commissioners' questions were also recorded, with the table of 'diets' and the school rules. Orders were given that 'the Great Room at the Council House be ready for their reception when they investigate the Charities under the direction of the Corporation.' The City Fathers certainly behaved as if they had nothing to hide and, if this was understandable in the case of the Red Maids' School, it was surely not so where the two boys' schools were concerned.³⁵

The main criticism that was made at the Red Maids' School concerned the health of the girls. The Mayor and Alderman Daniel agreed that they

should not be kept sitting at their work from eight in the morning to twelve or even one o'clock. The Treasurer had proposed that they should never sit beyond twelve, that there should be another 'meat day,' extra bread at breakfast and a change of linen twice instead of once a week. He also reported that he had 'conversed with the Children apart from the Mistress and Teacher as to their general treatment and asked them if I could do anything to better their situation and make them more comfortable, and they told me they had no complaint to make.' Any child would do so, of course, fearing that her comments might be reported and also not knowing what might be possible. The Commissioners had mentioned the possibility of granting marriage portions, as suggested by the first feoffees in their Declaration of Trust, but he was against it. It would 'expose the Girls to the address of very improper persons and would unsettle their minds at a time when they ought to be thinking of going into service.' However, when the Commissioners' Report was published, the matter of marriage portions provoked a good deal of controversy. The Editor of *The Bristol Observer* concluded that every girl who had been educated at the school and did, 'truly and faithfully serve out her apprenticeship, and well and honestly demean herself, and continue in good life and honest conversation until she was married,' had an absolute right to her share of the surplus in the form of £10 or £20 marriage portions. 'A Barrister' suggested that the 'opinion' of the Trustees or of the whole Council on this matter was irrelevant, only the Chancery Court could permit 'such a departure from the declaration made by the original trustees.'³⁶

Another matter for criticism was the custom of selecting the girls from 'the class usually on the list of those receiving parish relief,' rather than 'from a higher grade in the scale of poverty.' The 'Barrister' argued that Whitson 'carefully directs the education of certain young women to be such that, if his plan be well executed, they must prove suitable wives for the other objects of his care,' that is for 'mere merchants and free burgesses,' or poor handicraftsmen and tradesmen who had fallen on hard times or who needed a start in business. 'It is not pretended,' the 'Barrister' notes, 'that the loans which he provides, are to be made in order to qualify the *men* for menial service.' There was general condemnation of the statement of Alderman Daniel that it was the Founder's 'express intention that the children should be made good servants.' Nothing of the sort could be found in the Will or in the Trust Deed of April, 1634. On the contrary, the 'Barrister' noted that the Will allowed for the employment of such servants as would be needed

in the house to care for the Mistress and the girls and drew the 'obvious conclusion that to have them educated for *servants* was the furthest thing possible from the design of the worthy Founder.' The Editor of the *Bristol Observer* saw 'no occasion for assuming that servitude is the natural or most fitting destination of poor females.'

Another important criticism concerned the system of 'farming' the girls' work. They were nominally apprenticed to the Mistress, who taught them needle-work and took the proceeds of their sewing. Mrs. Bryant's statement that she kept no accounts but estimated that she made £100 a year from the work caused an outcry. The 'Barrister' calculated that this was 'truly absurd.' 'Here are forty girls of various ages, from eight years to twenty, ...they are known to be skilful in their occupation to an admirable degree; yet they only earn £2 10s. 0d. each per annum, or, deducting holidays, about 2½d. a day.' He contrasted this with the Royal Freemasons' Charity in London which averaged £230 a year. Lieut. Edward Rotton, in a letter to Alderman Daniel in 1837, maintained that it was 'a well known fact that the Matrons have made by the work of the Girls between three and four hundred pounds a year, besides having no rent or taxes or servants to pay and her own living nearly found out of the allowance of the girls.' It was not the intention of the founder 'that one Individual Female should receive the whole and sole advantage of the slavish labour of forty children and themselves receive little or no benefit.'

The 'Barrister' pointed out that the Red Maids' School had 'capital in abundance for materials...they have *numbers* of operatives, without being compelled to hazard their health by overwork; and they are placed in a thriving commercial town.' He suggested that it would be more useful for the girls to be taught many trades, passing from one to the other as they became proficient. He mentioned several he could think of, including some of those successfully taught in the Edinburgh schools. In his list he mentioned also, 'Straw works of various kinds, plain mantua-making and millinery, Dutch knitting, upholsterers' work, muslin works and lace-making, goose-down tippet and muff-making, embroidery for shops, stays-making, getting-up linen well, making waist-coats and other light clothes, shoe binding, glove-making,' and many others, 'and the knowledge of *prices* of all these and Book-keeping.' He felt that the families of the girls would welcome them back into the home with such skills 'capable of adding essentially to the future support of the family.' 'To bring these young women up for menial service only, is to complete

that plunge into the lowest rank to which the misfortunes or early death of the father of the family, had originally exposed them.'

Other criticisms concerned the cost of the annual dinner; money paid to the school by the Council in the early eighteenth century, and the fact that the body of Feoffees was made up entirely of Councillors. It would seem that the trustees took few of these criticisms to heart, unless Alderman Daniel's later plans for the school and the introduction of marriage portions resulted from the controversies of 1821.³⁷

Alderman Daniel and his wife, who took a great interest in the school, had already decided to use some of the surplus funds to increase the number of girls there. On Founder's Day, 1823, he told the Feoffees of plans to buy premises in Denmark Street which were at that time on lease from the Corporation to Messrs. Strickland and Wadham. A year later the purchase had gone through for the sum of £1,437. In 1827, with the school's finances still flourishing, the number of girls was raised to fifty and various encumbrances on the Denmark Street property were paid off. By 1829, it was proposed to enlarge the school to a hundred girls and Alderman Daniel had commissioned plans from a local architect and one from London, Charles Dyer of 75, Coleman Street, London. Mr. Dyer produced new plans for Denmark Street, but the problem remained one of space since, with so many girls and much enlarged buildings, there would be insufficient land for playgrounds.

When the project was debated by the Mayor and Aldermen in 1830, there were several possibilities, including the Denmark Street plan and a house in George Street, where again much new building would be needed. After some discussion, it was 'determined that it is not expedient to remove the School from its present situation.' This did not deter Alderman Daniel, who was the leader of the Tory party in the Council and sometimes called 'the King of Bristol.' He had already investigated two other possible sites, one in Park Row owned by Daniel Orlidge, and an area in Tyndall's Park where a completely new building could be erected.³⁸

Estimates were prepared by Mr. Sturge and Mr. Dyer to show the cost of building

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Denmark Street | £9,995 0s. 0d. |
| Mr. Orlidge's in Park Row | £7,563 0s. 0d. |
| Tyndall's Park | £4,913 0s. 0d. |

These were to prove somewhat inaccurate. Mr. Dyer had no doubts as to which site was preferable. 'If I may be allowed to express an opinion, I should say that the Park is by far the most eligible site, the building would there stand isolated in an airy and elevated situation and be at all times an ornament to the City. In Denmark Street it would be in a great measure concealed from public view, in Tyndall's Park it would be near the main road and, of course, a conspicuous object.' Dyer was thinking only of his building; these were the very attributes which later made the building seem so unsuitable to the Trustees of the Bristol Municipal Charities.³⁹

By May 1831, after several meetings at which various plans were examined and discussed, the Committee of Mayor and Aldermen finally resolved that the Red Maids' School should be moved 'from the present confined and inconvenient situation.' The riots of the following October in which the Mansion House in Queen Square was burnt, made it necessary to take over the George Street house for a Mansion House, thus making the choice of the Tyndall's Park site almost inevitable. There was, however, a crucial delay of a year and a half between September, 1831 and April, 1833, when perhaps the Mayor and Aldermen were engaged in other duties in the aftermath of the riots, before Alderman Daniel proposed to the City Surveyors to buy an area of land at the top of Park Street with a frontage of 179 feet for which the Charity would pay £970 and a ground rent of £10 a year. The Feoffees set up a special sub-committee to supervise the building. They had no idea that only two years remained to them.⁴⁰

It was not until a year later, in early December, 1834, that Mr. Dyer brought the plans to the committee. They were unanimously approved, specifications were produced and a Clerk of the Works, Tobias Prigg, was appointed. Throughout the spring of 1835, while the Mayor and Aldermen were busy disputing material in the Report on Municipal Corporations, Prigg and his men laboured on the excavations at the top of Park Street. They found the site on Brandon Hill where the soil and rock were to be dumped so steep that the hauliers demanded extra money. Costs rose alarmingly. It may be that Prigg was inefficient or that he wished the work to go slowly or that Dyer should have been on hand to supervise. Tenders for masons, carpenters and painters went out to the Bristol papers in April and in May the committee accepted the lowest ones. By September, 1835, £1,350 had been spent on the excavation, putting in the sewer and sinking a well. The total payment to the Council for the land and the purchase of a fee-farm rent was £1,270 and payments to masons and carpenters by October 1836 totalled £3,256.⁴¹

The ledger shows the following totals to October, 1836

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| cost of land | £1,270 0s. 0d. |
| costs in 1834–1835 | £1,578 7s. 6d. |
| costs in 1835–1836 | £3,203 11s. 10d. |
| | <u>£6,051 19s. 4d.</u> |

(one ledger total of £6,104 19s. 4s. includes £53 of 'lying-in' money added by the clerk in error)

On 9 December, 1835, Alderman Daniel asked the Common Council to release £800 of 3% consols and £3,100 of 3% 1726 stocks belonging to the Feoffees of the Charity but standing in the name of the Corporation, which was needed to pay the instalments for the building of the new school. However, the transfer books were not open until January by which time there would be a new Council in office under the Municipal Corporations Act and he was advised to apply then. The Feoffees were to remain in office until later in 1836 when the Trustees of the Bristol Municipal Charities would take over.⁴²

Alderman Daniel seems not to have envisaged any difficulty, however, for the next day, he told the Mayor and Aldermen of arrangements being made to admit seven more children to the school, and, sometime during that year he advanced £1,000 of his own money to the school. He was an extremely rich man and Latimer suggests that his company, with houses in London as well as in Bristol, received no less than £250,000 in 1833, when his West Indian slaves were emancipated. He died in 1854 leaving over £200,000. He and his wife were very much interested in the Red Maids' School and may have intended to give a considerable donation towards the cost of the new building, which was almost entirely his creation.

During 1836, he went ahead with his plans to reform the running of the school and its system of education. At a meeting of the Feoffees, 'late Aldermen of the City of Bristol,' in February 1836, Mr. Daniel, still the Treasurer of the Charity, produced a letter complaining of the conduct of the Red Maids. He had spoken to Mrs. Empson and found that it was all true. She was called into the meeting and questioned 'and the Gentlemen present being of the opinion that great mismanagement existed in the arrangements of the School and the superintendence and control over the children,' decided that Mrs. Empson, because of her advanced age, was unable properly to perform her duties and that it would be desirable for

her to leave, 'particularly as the establishment will be considerably extended as soon as the new Building is complete.' She was asked to leave on 1 May, 'and the Trustees would do what is right and proper in regard to any remuneration they might make to her.' Poor Elizabeth Empson, who had been connected with the school for so long, begged to be allowed to stay and care for the children, 'still having the interest of the children nearest my heart.' The Feoffees agreed that she should be paid £120, in consideration of leaving the School at short notice, and set about advertising in each of the Bristol papers for new Staff. Applications were to be in by 18 April, and applicants must be either single or widowed and aged between twenty-six and forty. They must be capable of instructing the children in reading, writing and sewing and reference might be made to Mr. Garrard for further information. Testimonials as to character and qualifications 'from persons of respectability' were to be produced on or before 18 April.⁴³

There were several applications and Mary Wheeler, Elizabeth Read and Mary Palmer Champion were short-listed for interview. Mary Wheeler was unanimously approved as the new Matron of the school. She was to be allowed £16 a year for each girl, but not to receive the proceeds of their work. On the Matron's 'taking possession of the school,' the Feoffees would provide each child with a new suit of red clothes, four pairs of shoes and four pairs of stockings, but, after that, they were to be provided by the Matron. She was to keep a book of accounts of the needle-work done by the children and the proceeds were to be paid to the Agent quarterly. The Matron was also to find board for the Mistress and the assistant Teacher and provide their bed-linen. She was not to be absent from the school without the permission of the Mayoress or the Senior Alderman's Lady and she must conform strictly to the school rules.

Mary Palmer Champion was chosen to be the Mistress at a salary of £100 a year. She was to be boarded by the Matron and her linen was to be washed by the girls. She must keep an account of all work done which must be handed to the Matron to show to the Agent. She must also supervise the children's playtime and not be absent without permission, but might visit her friends in her spare time. Mary Ann Weaver was appointed Assistant Teacher at £20 a year. She was to assist the other two ladies and not be absent without the permission of the Matron, with whom she would take her meals. The much criticised 'farming' system was thus abolished, and by Mr. Daniel, well before the school was taken over by the Charity Trustees, and a more suitable staff was appointed for the

larger school which Mr. Daniel hoped would before long occupy the new building at the top of Park Street.⁴⁴

It was not the case, as Larcombe thought when he wrote his thesis on Education in Bristol, that, 'The interest taken by the Corporation in the School was of the slightest.' Legally, the school was governed, not by the Corporation, but by a group of independent Trustees. In practice, these were all Councillors and the school was run by the Committee of Mayor and Aldermen, but its accounts and property were managed quite separately and apparently very efficiently. It is also untrue that the new school building was an 'expensive "white elephant,"' or that 'little had been accomplished when the Municipal Corporation Act caused the suspension of the project.' There was nothing in the Act to cause the new Trustees to stop the building, in fact, they had eventually to complete it according to an edict of the Chancery Court. It was certainly not the old Corporation 'which produced only a £17,000 burden to be shouldered by the new Trustees without any corresponding asset.' By October, 1836, there was an almost completed building on which masons, carpenters and painters were still working, and which had cost something over £6,000. It was the action of the new Trustees in stopping the work and leaving the building for several years during an appeal to Chancery which made the costs escalate. Even so, when the building was eventually put in order and sold, the loss to the school is estimated to have been £3,000, rather than £17,000.⁴⁵

In a period when the Grammar School had no charity boys among its pupils and then, for some years had no pupils at all, and Queen Elizabeth's Hospital was being charged with a huge debt by the Corporation, the Red Maids' School, its lands well managed, the 'farming' system abolished, and with a wealthy patron, was preparing to expand its numbers to 100 girls and to move into a large new building in the best part of town. Where the old Corporation was at fault was in the vacillation and indolence which prevented the building from being completed several years previously. Indeed they were, 'Too rich to be dishonest, too indolent and self-indulgent to cope with their task.'

CHAPTER IV

The Bristol Municipal Charities

It has been generally supposed that 'throughout the three centuries prior to 1836, Bristol Corporation had a bad record in the administration of the educational endowments for which it was trustee' and that 'things improved when, following the general Parliamentary reform of Municipal Government in 1835, the Bristol Municipal Charities Trustees were established in 1836.' Neither generalization is entirely justified and, perhaps particularly in the case of the Red Maids' School.¹

The Report of the Municipal Corporations Commission was rather a Liberal Manifesto than a balanced judgement and the passage of the Act through Parliament further enraged party opinion. The Act laid it down that the new Corporations, when elected, should appoint Trustees to manage the Charitable Trusts from 1 August, 1836. In Bristol, the two parties called a brief truce and submitted a list of names in which both were equally represented. However, the requirement of Chancery that there should be an unequal number provoked an acrimonious dispute which ended with the Liberal majority on the Council submitting a list which included eighteen Liberals and only three Tories, Alderman Daniel not being one, and this list was accepted by the Lord Chancellor. The new Trustees were mainly merchants, tradesmen and professional men; most were Councillors, some were Aldermen and about half were J.P.s for the City. By 1851, when new Trustees were chosen, calmer counsels prevailed and the Conservatives negotiated until a more balanced list was achieved.²

The first meeting of the new Trustees took place at the Commercial Rooms in Bristol on 27 October, 1836. James Cunningham, who became the first Chairman, read the report of the Master in Chancery confirming their appointment. Rooms were taken in Albion Chambers, Small Street, and Thomas Manchee was engaged as Secretary. Subsequently, an agent, solicitors and bankers were appointed and a small staff for the office. On 21 November, 1836, the new Trustees met to read Whitson's will and the Trust Deed of April, 1634. Manchee, who had printed the Report of the Charity Commissioners, could probably produce copies of all the relevant documents but it was agreed that they should immediately apply to the Town Clerk and the City Treasurer for all the books, deeds, documents, papers, money, funds and government

stocks to be transferred to them. When this meeting ended, several of the Trustees, with Thomas Manchee, walked across to the school to accompany the girls to the usual Founder's Day service at St. Nicholas.' Afterwards, they returned to the school where Mr. Cunningham spoke to the girls and each girl was given a shilling and the mistresses five shillings each. Later, the Trustees and the Secretary dined at the *Rummer Tavern*, each paying for his own dinner, and the clergy were invited as guests.³

At the next meeting, on 6 December, Manchee reported that he had visited the school, where Mrs. Wheeler had told him of the new arrangements made at her appointment; the end to 'farming,' the £16 a year for each girl, the new Teacher and Assistant. The diet lists had also been improved and, with the increased salaries, the costs of running the school had doubled in the last two years. As a result, a committee was set up to survey the state of the schools and Mr. Bengough was to apply to the City Chamberlain for £1,000 on the City Seals of the eighteenth century. The half-year's wages of the three staff at the Red Maids' School amounted to over £242, while the one master at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital received only £62.⁴

On 24 January, 1837, the Schools Committee was summoned to hear an urgent report on the new building at the top of Park Street. The financial details were set out, estimating the cost of building the 'spacious and magnificent structure' at £7,213 3s. 0d., though only £2,900 had as yet been paid to the contractors. Dyer, who must have thought he was still dealing with Alderman Daniel, had even submitted a new plan for extra accommodation in the roof and a w.c. for each of the two dormitories. Manchee put the likely final cost of the building at £10,731 19s. 10d., without any indication of how such a figure was arrived at. To this he added costs for furnishings and 'outside work' to bring the probable total to 'not less than £16,000.' The building was designed for 100 to 150 girls, but the approval of the Chancery Court had not been asked for such a major change nor had the consent of the whole Common Council been obtained for the alienation of Corporation land to the school. Manchee was certainly less than honest here, inflating the probable costs and raising difficulties where it was most unlikely that they would arise. He was so unwilling to give the old Council any praise for the good management of the estates or for the money given regularly to the school in the early days, that he even suggested that the only reason for the flourishing state of the school's finances was that they had not been giving marriage portions. The design of the building was wrong; the basement would be damp and

the usual principle of having every part of the school under the eye of the Mistress had been quite lost sight of.

However, when the Schools' Committee visited the building, they found another, much greater cause for concern. 'Your Committee, upon examining the site and the building thereon, could not but perceive that it is situate in a great thoroughfare between the old City of Bristol and the opulent and much frequented Clifton – that it is the most public and fashionable and conspicuous spot in the whole vicinity of Bristol and Clifton; a position in the judgement of your committee unfit for the abode of the objects of this Charity, as being particularly calculated to stimulate the curiosity of the idle and licentious, exposing the inmates to the habitual sight of dissipation and gaiety. Your Committee, conceiving that a residence in a more homely and retired situation would be more suitable for bringing up the women children in modesty, frugality and sobriety... The very beauty and magnificence of the edifice' would unfit the children 'for the closer and humbler dwellings it must necessarily be their lot in after life to inhabit.' They recommended that the Trustees should take Counsel's opinion as to whether they need adopt the new building and whether they should apply to the Chancery Court.

Manchee wrote the same day to Garrard, informing him of the Trustees' decision and suggesting the 'expediency of suspending the said works until it can be ascertained whether it can be carried on by them, or it must be at the risk of the late Feoffees.' After that, as contractors sent in their bills, Manchee wrote to each of them that the new Trustees had ordered him 'to communicate...their entire dissent from your proceeding at present with the work,' and no further payments were made. As a result, work on the building gradually came to a halt, the windows were shuttered and only a night-watchman patrolled the deserted building.⁵

The Liberals had come to power with a mandate to cut waste and a conviction that the old Corporation had seriously mismanaged the town's Charities but, on the other hand, they did not accept the views of reformers who suggested a different organization for the school or a more varied training for the girls. Their lowly status was much stressed, the only work was to be housewifery and needlework, though they were also supposed to learn reading, writing and arithmetic. 'Farming' was finally rejected in 1838 and the provision of food and household goods was put out to tender, the lowest tender being almost invariably accepted, with the result that most years brought complaints of inadequate food, bad bread, tainted meat, watered milk or poor quality coal.⁶

As early as 3 February, 1837, it was clear that the Trustees had decided on more changes. Mr. Herepath suggested applying to other similar 'establishments,' to obtain information on their state and management and to report on any 'improvements' which might be made in the school. They seem to have written to Christ's Hospital, as a letter is noted from the Master promising to send the required information. One hesitates in this context to quote the principle of 'less eligibility' as applied by the Liberals to the new 'Union' workhouses, but, in 1841, the Secretary was directed to procure a copy of *The Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Training of Pauper Children* for each of the schools.

The Matron and the two Mistresses were warned that 'improvements' were to be made and that, unless they were prepared to accept new conditions of service, they must be ready to leave by the end of the year. A petition was prepared to present to Chancery and, in May 1837, the Schools Committee reported again on the new building. It was a repetition of much that had been said before; the building was unsuited to the use of the Charity; utility had been sacrificed to effect; they wished to be relieved of the building or, at least, to be permitted to dispose of it, even if a loss were sustained. They believed the existing building could be converted or a new building be provided on the existing Denmark Street site big enough for a hundred children. It would have the advantage of seclusion, 'which your Committee conceive to be of high value to any institution of this description,' they went on to consider the salaries and duties of the Staff and the immediate problems of running the School while preparing the new scheme to be submitted to Chancery. In the meantime, things probably proceeded much as usual at the school. New clothes were ordered at the end of February, including fifty Dunstable bonnets lined with purple and with purple strings, cloth for caps and aprons and fifty-four yards of Jaconet muslin for tippets.⁷ Only £2 8s. 0d. was spent on books, but the walls were white-washed, there were holidays for the birthday of the Princess Victoria, mourning for the death of William IV and visits to the Museum and the Zoo.

Perhaps the two changes most conducive to the comfort of the Red Maids during the year were, first, the edict which moved the drying ground for the washing into the Matron's garden, giving them more space for play, and then the success of Mr. James, the apothecary, in eradicating the 'itch' which was once again making their lives a misery. It usually disappeared for six months in the winter, only to break out again each spring. All the girls were to be bathed with soft soap and then put to bed for a week, during

which time they were rubbed with a special ointment and then put on a clean chemise. Woollen clothes were not to be worn next to the skin, so each girl was provided with a calico shift. Two girls at home with 'cutaneous and other diseases,' were not allowed to return to the school.⁸

By the end of the year, the new scheme had been prepared and all the Whitson documents were sent to the Chancery Court. It was agreed that the accounts should be audited at the first meeting in October each year and an abstract of the Accounts was to be published in pursuance of Peel's dictum that, 'The most effectual check on the renewal of those abuses was to make public a full statement of the particulars of each Charity.' The published accounts are not sufficiently detailed to be really useful since they show the main headings of income and expenditure with no indication of details of administration. What does stand out is the greatly increased costs. The Charities had to pay for premises, Secretary, Clerk and junior clerk, solicitor, banker, accountant and two surveyors of property. The Doctor also was paid for his services, at first £15 for each school, soon £25 and later £50. In the early years, legal expenses were very high and made Mr. Garrard's £90 for administration and about £40 for the Audit dinner pale into insignificance.⁹

The Red Maids' case was determined by the Vice-Chancellor on the morning of 4 June, 1838. His judgement betrayed all the problems of making a reasonable decision at such a distance and without access to much of the evidence. He thought that the Trustees should accept the new building and complete it, but were then at liberty to sell it. He felt that the architect's plan for a new school in Denmark Street allowed far too little playing space for 112 girls aged eight to eighteen. 'But against this was to be set the fact that the Charity had been so ably managed by the late Trustees for 200 years, that no remarkable degree of sickness prevailed among the children upon the old spot, and if the Red Maids had flourished so long on the old site near College Green, he did not see why they should not continue to do so.' This was to ignore the fact that during those 200 years there had been only forty girls not 100 on the site and also to ignore the increasing industrialization of the centre of the City. A contemporary hand has written on the newspaper cutting, 'You see that he mistakes Robert for Richard all through.' A memorial was at once received from some of the parents who were invited to attend the next meeting of the Trustees to voice their complaints.¹⁰

Work began again on the new building which must have deteriorated in the meantime and which was not ready for sale until early in 1841. W.A. Sampson reports that a ledger account shows the total cost of building

to have been £12,935 13s. 4d., a sum which must have been materially increased from the earlier estimate of some £10,000 by the long delay. The sale was advertized in both the local and the London papers but there were few enquiries and, on 23 July, the Trustees decided to buy it for the boys of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital for £9,250 and had set up a committee to organize the move from the Bartholomews to the top of Park Street. However, on 3 August, the Solicitor reported an offer of £500 more from the Bishop's College. The Trustees felt they could not refuse it, so, as Sampson remarks, 'For the sake of £500, this fine building was lost to Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, then unhappily situated in Christmas Street, and sold to the Bishop's College at a loss of £3,000 to the Red Maids' School.' In October 1847, just six years later, a new school for Queen Elizabeth's Hospital was completed on Brandon Hill, not far from the Park Street building, at a cost of £17,000.

During this period, the Charity minute books give the impression that the new Trustees had far too much to do. Their first priority was to re-establish the two boys' schools and recover their property from the Corporation. Other charities, such as alms-houses, also had to be improved or re-founded. The Red Maids' School had occupied a favoured position for some years and could wait until other more urgent matters had been attended to. The new building was a considerable embarrassment to them and it was 1843 before the negotiations with the Council about the various properties were completed.¹¹

The three teachers were given notice of the termination of their employment on Lady Day, 1838, and their posts were advertized in the Bristol newspapers at the end of February. The Trustees wanted three Mistresses, one at £60 a year, an under-mistress at £40 and an assistant at £20, in addition to free board and lodging. They must be unmarried and have no family. The same year the Trustees agreed a salary of £200 a year and a paid housekeeper for the Headmaster of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital. At the Red Maids' School, Mrs. Wheeler was again appointed Mistress, Sophia Ann Stuart under-mistress and Ann Chin assistant. Of these, only Ann Chin appears on the short list, which suggests that the fourteen others listed were either all unsuitable or had second thoughts when they saw the place and heard the conditions of work.

This was the start of a disastrous period of frequent staff changes and poor discipline at the school. Mrs. Wheeler was dismissed before a month had passed, with some public recriminations in the *Bristol Mirror*, and, in the ten

years from 1838, the school had twenty-five different Mistresses, five teachers of singing, a nurse who was dismissed after a few months, a succession of clergymen who visited the school to teach Scripture, and two or three women porters in their turn. Miss Stuart stayed four years as under-mistress and Miss Hensley five years as Head Mistress, but Miss Hensley regularly required two or three weeks in the country to recuperate and she resigned at last in July, 1848, because of 'the anxiety and responsibility of the Office.'¹²

There were epidemics of 'fever' in 1840 and 1842 and smallpox in January, 1845. Cases of ringworm were frequent and it was usual for three or four girls at any one time to be at home or at the seaside, ill or convalescent. The apothecary was ordered to attend two days a week and note any illness in a book kept at the school for that purpose. If the parents of a girl at home were very poor, up to five shillings a week was allowed them for the girl's maintenance as long as she attended the house of the school Doctor for treatment. Of the considerable number of girls withdrawn from the school by their parents or friends during these years, several were removed because of illness or because of epidemics at the school.¹³

Discipline was an even greater problem. It would be naive to suppose that the morale of mistresses, girls and parents did not suffer from the disappointment of not moving to the grand building at the top of Park Street which they saw every time they went out for a walk or to Church. It is also certain that the calibre of staff declined with the severe cuts in salaries. It became a vicious circle of staff leaving because they could not control the girls and the girls insubordinate because they did not know and learn to respect the Mistresses who came and went so quickly. Twenty-four girls were expelled during these thirteen years and several were withdrawn by their parents at the request of the Trustees. After Mrs Wheeler's dismissal, the Schools' Committee organized a rota system for visiting the schools each week, two of the Trustees taking the duty each month. In October, 1838, the new Mistress, Miss Barr, complained that she was unable to control the older girls. Some of them kept her waiting ten or twenty minutes after the bell had rung for breakfast or for prayers and 'no impediment to their being ready to attend but their own caprice.' She was assured of the Governors' support in any measures she might take but, a month later, she again wrote to the Trustees giving the names of seven girls who had 'behaved in such a disorderly, riotous and impertinent manner that, unless measures (were) immediately taken...to put a stop to such conduct,' it would be impossible for her to remain as Head Mistress. Eight others had also behaved badly

but were not so impertinent. The Trustees interviewed some of the girls and four of the first group were expelled. The others were warned that any repetition would lead to their expulsion. The Schools' Committee next tried to encourage good behaviour by dividing the girls into four groups, the parents of one group being allowed to visit each Saturday afternoon between two and four o'clock as long as the girls had been good.

The next mistress Mrs. Dursey, remained only a year. There were tales of her ordering her own supplies of beer, entertaining a Master from Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and bringing girls into the parlour to sing for him. There was evidence of extravagance in the school and, when the Assistant, Mrs. King, was found to be Mrs. Dursey's sister and unable to teach, both were dismissed.¹⁴

By March, 1842, the girls had moved out temporarily and the contractors had started to take down the old building. The corner-stone of the new building was laid on 24 June and the Secretary was empowered to give each of the men half a crown and to advise them to 'carry it home to their families.' The new school was to be lighted by gas and the school room, dining room and waiting room were to be heated by 'Mr. Perkins' new apparatus.' The total cost, including furnishings, was £7,320 12s. 4d. The building was completed by 5 August, 1843, and the Red Maids moved in early in September.

The *Bristol Mirror* printed a lyrical description of the occasion and of the building. 'On Monday last the Red Maids, ninety-five in number, left their temporary residence in Trinity Street, and took possession of the noble building in Denmark Street, designed for their school. Amongst the many recent structural improvements in Bristol, the new Red Maids' School stands amongst the foremost... The frontage of the building in Denmark Street is elegantly constructed of freestone, and the back which forms three sides of a quadrangle, is of red brick, the windows and door-ways being of freestone. The fourth side of the quadrangle, which encloses a large airy court-yard or playground is formed by an arcade for the girls to recreate in wet weather. The interior of the school is very beautiful – the entrance hall and great staircase resembling very much those of an elegant mansion... The Schoolroom is beautifully and conveniently fitted up with several rows of oak forms, slightly raised above each other and long narrow work tables in front of each row. The two principal dormitories are large and airy and capable of holding not less than, in one ninety-five, and the other seventy-six beds; besides these, there are an Infirmary and Nurse's room and

other smaller bedrooms... The kitchens, sculleries and other offices are of a superior order and fitted up with apparatus of the newest and most approved invention, one of the most striking of which is that for drying clothes, in which a garment may be perfectly dried in twenty minutes. The whole house is heated by warm water apparatus. Every attention has been paid to cleanliness of the children, and a large marble bath has been provided for their use. There is one very excellent arrangement in the School, namely that of the Mistresses' apartments communicating more or less with the whole house, by which means she has the power of overlooking the girls and the servants of the establishment at all times.' It was reported that there would be 140 Red Maids in the school by Whitson's Day, 1843.¹⁵

In spite of the new building, problems of health and discipline continued at the school. While the girls were in temporary premises in November, 1842, there was an epidemic of fever in the school and both the under-mistresses were dismissed, leaving a new Headmistress to obtain what temporary assistance she could. Some of the cases of fever were very severe and Miss Board herself died on 25 February. Miss Hensley then became Headmistress and was joined by Miss Elizabeth Browne, as a teacher, in May. That October, the Chairman visited the school, saw some of the bad behaviour and sent twenty-four girls home. All were eventually allowed back, as the parents were 'sensible of the impropriety of their conduct' and the children apologized to the Mistress. Miss Hensley then tried a system of small monetary rewards for good behaviour, but it seems to have had little effect, as three girls were expelled in January 1844, in November, six more were punished for collecting money and school property in their boxes in preparation for running away, and two more girls were expelled in June 1845. In January, 1845, there were several cases of smallpox in the school, as well as other sickness, and in the years 1845 and 1846, some fifteen girls were sent to the country or to the seaside for their health, and six were withdrawn from the school by their parents or friends. In June 1845, when a group of Trustees visited the school, they became seriously concerned and set up a special committee to report on the best method of improvement.

A new set of Rules had been recorded in the School Minute Book on 2 August, 1844. There were few changes. The girls still rose at six, went to the schoolroom for prayers at seven and breakfasted at eight. They worked from nine until twelve and from two until five. Supper was at six and then they were to be quiet in the schoolroom under the supervision of a mistress until half past seven, when there were prayers, and they went to bed at eight.

Between the times set aside for work, there were short periods of play, but the girls were supervised by one of the mistresses at all times. They were to be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, needlework 'and such other Branches of English Education as the Trustees may from time to time direct.' Miss Hensley's scheme of monetary rewards was detailed, but parents were no longer to visit the school. Instead, the girls were to go home every fourth Monday. The girls over twelve were still to do most of the housework and, apart from that, they were not to go into any part of the house except the school room and playground during the daytime. There were rules about 'Grace' at mealtimes, about 'tickets' for other visits to their homes, fines for breakages, clean laundry once a week, Church on Sundays, and the use of the senior girls to teach the younger ones at the discretion of the Mistress. There were sets of rules for the Mistress and for the Teachers and rules for the School Library, though no list of books. The rules, as a statement of established practice, were probably useful to give to new Staff or Governors.

In November, 1845, Miss Hensley discovered that the organ blower and the Sexton's son at the Mayor's Chapel had been carrying letters to and from the Red Maids and the Chairman agreed to speak to the Mayor. The last straw for Miss Hensley came on 14 July, 1846, when five of the girls absconded. It seems to have been a fairly innocent prank of a lively group of girls who had no complaint against the school, except that they were afraid that they would be punished for corresponding with the boys. They had spent the night with an aunt of one of them at Lawrence Hill. However, they were all expelled and Miss Hensley sent in her resignation. For a short time, Miss Harriet Banks was Head Mistress but, when she proved unsatisfactory, she was dismissed and Miss Elizabeth Browne was appointed in her place. Miss Browne had been a mistress at the school since May, 1843, and her sister, Sarah, also came to teach there. Both remained until the changes brought about by the Endowed Schools' Commissioners. Of the other teachers in the following years, Miss Masters stayed for thirteen years and Miss Austin for eleven, resigning in 1864, when the Secretary 'was desired to express to her the Trustees' appreciation of her valuable services during the eleven years she has been connected with the school.'¹⁶

This provided the stability the school so badly needed. There were, by this time 120 girls there and they still stayed until they were eighteen, but, with Miss Browne in charge, the place had changed. Miss Laver, who was appointed under-mistress in 1865, later wrote to Mr. Sampson of 'the spotless cleanliness and the perfect order in which things were kept. It was

a bright, happy place, with an atmosphere of kindness and sympathy.' In addition to six or seven teachers, there were four servants, a nurse, cook, laundress and porteress and twenty girls each month were appointed to do the housework. From 1850, it seems that an effort was made to secure young teachers with some training. Letters were written to the British and Foreign Society at Borough Road and to the Rev. Close, who was 'connected with the Training School' at Cheltenham. The girls of eight or ten who were candidates for entry to the school were, by 1853, required to be able to read and write, reflecting the improvement in elementary education in the City. Sampson describes the routine of this period. The girls rose at 6.30, attended prayers at 7.30 and then went to breakfast. Morning school began at 9.15 with dictation, spelling and parsing, followed by geography or history from 10.15 to 10.45. Then until 11.15 there was singing, drill or play, and reading, geography or walking occupied the time from 11.15 to dinner at 12.30. The girls then played in the yard until afternoon lessons began at 2.0, with domestic economy until 3.0 and then needlework or singing until 5.0. The school still had a good reputation for fine needlework and, in August, 1851, received a donation of £6 7s. 0d. from Captain Allen, of the Paragon, Clifton, 'for the recreation of the girls, in acknowledgement of their very beautiful work in some shirts they had made for him.'¹⁷

There seems, also, to have been some improvement in the health of the girls, which may reflect the general improvement in the community, the more hygienic conditions in the School or the appointment of Dr. Herepath as medical officer of the schools. His first action was to revive the rule that the girls should go for a walk twice a week in the evenings. He also recommended the purchase of two pairs of dumb bells for their exercise. On 11 February, 1853, he reported a case of smallpox in each of the schools. He had already isolated the sick children in separate rooms, where they were to stay until convalescent and then go away for a change. By 4 March, he was able to report that the two children were recovering and no-one else had caught it. He asked permission to publish the results of his treatment in one of the medical journals. This was granted and the Trustees were 'also desirous of expressing the satisfaction they feel at the zealous attention he has paid to his patients in the Schools during their illness and at all other times.'

Dr. Herepath frequently submitted reports and suggestions concerning the health of the children which the Trustees were quick to accept, though, unfortunately, they are not always detailed in the minutes. March, 1858, brought a new smallpox epidemic and, instead of going to their homes for

Easter, the children were kept in the school, just going out for long walks each day. He seemed to prefer girls whose parents lived in the City to come back to the school to sleep, even in the holidays. The Trustees ruled that all children should be examined by the doctor before being admitted to the school and chronically sick children were dismissed to their homes. In 1861, Dr. Herepath recommended hot baths for Elizabeth Walker and the Secretary was asked to arrange for her to be admitted to Bath Hospital. In 1864, with smallpox again in the City, he was given permission to vaccinate the children as soon as possible. Dr. Herepath died on 12 October, 1868, and, though there had been illness and some deaths in the school during his term of office, the health of the girls was certainly improved as a result of his assiduous care.

On 23 October, the Trustees listed the conditions of employment of a new doctor to be appointed. He must visit each school weekly and more often if necessary and he must treat patients absent from school who came to his house. He was to prescribe for the Staff also, but not provide the drugs for them, as he did for the children. All children were to be examined before admission. His salary was to be £50 for each school. Mr. F. Poole Lansdown, a surgeon, of 11, Park Street, was appointed and, inevitably, was promptly labelled 'the Butcher' by the children.¹⁸

By far the majority of the girls still went into service when they left the school. Of leavers 1851–1870 about 130 girls went into a 'situation,' usually as lady's maid, parlour maid, housemaid or nursery maid. Most were in or near Bristol, though they might be as far as Torquay, London or Glasgow. The name and address of the prospective employer are noted and the Mistress was supposed to try to ensure that each girl went to a suitable 'place.' Not every offer of a job was accepted by the school. Twenty-one girls were apprenticed to dress-making or millinery; seventy-six, mainly in the 1860s, 'went to learn a business;' eleven, all after 1866, went into teaching; some went to help at home and four went to the colonies with their parents. Some of the teaching posts were interesting. In August, 1858, Mary Flower accepted a post at the Bathwick school; one girl went to help her Mother in a school in St. Philip's parish, and another went to help her sister in a school. One girl went to teach at Stroud and another at Mrs. Naish's school in Bedminster. Three others went to unnamed schools and – bravest of all – in 1865, Caroline Humphreys went as a junior teacher to Mary Carpenter's Reformatory in Park Row. Emily Millard remained as a pupil teacher at the Red Maids' School with a bursary of £10.¹⁹

The Trustees were equally concerned when granting marriage portions that they received testimonials to the good character of the prospective husband and refused one where the young man was still an apprentice. The number of girls applying was not large, but the evidence is that they were married rather late and mostly to local craftsmen. Anna Mason, who left in 1836, was in service until 1850 with a Captain Jenkins, a Staff Officer at Chatham. She applied on her approaching marriage to Sergeant Hewitson of the 11th Regiment. The same year, Elizabeth Thomas, who left in 1839, married a local carrier and Frances Bishop, who left in 1842, married a clerk employed by the Brighton Railway.

From 1858, the Trustees began to grant the schools three or four weeks' summer holiday, 'and the orphans in the school to be sent into the country.' Travel grants of £2 were then given to the Staff to enable them to visit their friends during the holiday. Improved relations between the Charity Trustees and the City Council were signified by the occasional visit of the Mayoress, usually bringing presents for the children, complimenting the teachers on the neatness of the house and asking for an extra day's holiday. In July one year, the Mayor took all the children to Portishead for the day, and, on 12 October, 1866, Mrs. Mayoress Abraham gave each girl a new sixpence, a bun and some sweets. In July, 1872, the Red Maids were invited to spend the day at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor at Stoke Bishop, where there was a large party of visitors. The girls sang for the guests, spent the afternoon in the gardens and the hayfield, consumed a 'bountiful tea' and enjoyed 'various amusements.' At 8.30 all gathered near the house again for more refreshments, the girls sang again and the day ended with the National Anthem.²⁰

The mid-nineteenth century produced a number of government enquiries into the state of education throughout the country, which resulted in a period of reorganization and change at the Red Maids' School, as elsewhere. At the end of November, 1858, the Secretary reported that he had accompanied Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Patrick Cummins on his inspection of the Red Maids' School, that he had examined the girls in various subjects and had expressed great satisfaction at the degree of efficiency they generally exhibited. He 'was directed to convey to Miss Browne and the other mistresses the expression of the Trustees' approbation of the favourable opinion of the Commissioner.'²¹

During the following decade, much more widespread and detailed investigations were undertaken. When the Clarendon Commission had revealed the unsatisfactory state of the great public schools and the misuse



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Red Maids (a) 1887, (b) 1909, (c) 1911, (d) 1940

there of charters and endowments, and the Newcastle Commission had shown the spread of elementary education, it was inevitable that there would be an investigation of secondary schools and particularly the endowed schools. Thus, in 1864, the Taunton Commission (or Schools Inquiry Commission) was set up with very wide terms of reference. At once Emily Davies wrote to Lord Lyttleton to ask 'whether it is intended to embrace girls' schools in the investigations of the Royal Commission.' She thought there could be 'no objection to including these schools, but we are anxious that they should not slip thro' by inadvertence.' She then prepared a paper showing that a great many endowments left to 'children' were being used solely for the education of boys and, while at Christ's Hospital there was a girls' school, the numbers were scandalously unequal; 1,192 boys with 27 masters and 18 girls with one mistress. Miss Buss, giving evidence to the Commission, stressed the poor educational standard of girls entering the North London Collegiate School, the lack of trained teachers and the absence of home training and discipline.²²

The Report of the Commission, issued in 1868, showed that the number of secondary schools throughout the country was completely inadequate, many people were dissatisfied with the old classical curriculum and wanted instead a sound training in mathematics and science. In many large towns, higher grade schools were needed, leading to University entrance. The commissioners believed that a new, more rational system of secondary education was necessary and that, in many areas it could be based on the old endowed schools. The inadequate provision of education for girls became a particular concern. There were only thirteen secondary schools for girls in the country and most offered a training inferior to that of the boys' schools. Mr. Stanton, visiting the West Country, was met by a blank refusal from Head Mistresses at Bath and Clifton. In many of the girls' schools he did visit he was, 'horrified by the lack of hygiene and proper ventilation and the absence of facilities for recreation.' He found discipline lax and cheating generally, tolerated. Girls were still taught by memorising a string of words and made elementary mistakes in every subject and yet he thought there was 'evidence to the effect that the essential capacity for learning is the same, *or nearly the same*, in both sexes.'²³

After studying the foundation of the Bristol Charity schools, the estates and their income and the duties of the Trustees, Mr. Stanton visited the schools. 'Site indifferent, buildings good,' was his first comment at the Red Maids' School. The Teachers all lived in, the Head Mistress's salary was £60

a year and the four other mistresses each received £40. There were at that time 120 pupils, all boarders, daughters of freemen, mechanics and small tradesmen, boarded, lodged, clad and educated at the expense of the Charity.

PROFESSIONS etc. OF PARENTS, 1869

Scholars highest in school

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Painter | Lower Ashley Road |
| 2. Painter | Old Market |
| 3. Printer | Bedminster |
| 4. Labourer | Grosvenor Place |
| 5. Lamp lighter | Jacob's Wells |
| 6. Dockman | Hotwells |
| 7. Postman | Easton |
| 8. Labourer | Berkeley Place |
| 9. Publican | Lwr. St. Michael's Hill |
| 10. Stewardess | Cathay |

Scholars lowest in school

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Wkg dentist | Hanover St. |
| 2. Needlewoman | Temple St. |
| 3. Warehouse man | Pithay |
| 4. Butcher | West St. |
| 5. Potter | Temple St. |
| 6. Butcher | Bedminster |
| 7. Marine store dealer | Hotwell Road |
| 8. Publican | Bedminster |
| 9. Milliner | Park Road |
| 10. Clerk | Wells St. |

The girls had three meals a day, with meat at mid-day. He went on to describe the building and its facilities, the girls' hours and general conditions. Here it would seem that the Red Maids, with their gas lighting, warm water and warm-air heating and their basement bath and wash room were very lucky. Miss Beale, reporting on the findings of the S.I.C. on girls' schools, noted that health was usually a problem. 'Boarders were fed on a surfeit of bread and butter, weak tea or coffee and puddings of various complexions. Meat and fresh milk seldom appeared unless parents were prepared to pay extra.' Lighting in most schools 'was by oil lamps – rarely by gas.' Washing water was plentiful, but it was usually cold, even in winter, as it was at Red Maids' in the dormitories upstairs.²⁴

Mr. Stanton classified the school as 'Elementary and Industrial.' He found it divided into seven classes, all using the schoolroom. This was

quite usual, the room being divided by curtains which could be drawn back when several groups had to be supervised by one teacher. Miss Beale reported that they found 'as a rule, a very small amount of professional skill, an inferior set of school books, a vast deal of dry, uninteresting task work, rules put into the memory with no explanation of their principles, no system of examination worthy of the name.' Much of this was true of the Red Maids' School in the 1850s and 1860s. The girls were in school for twenty-nine hours a week, forty-four weeks a year. Religious Instruction was given by a visiting clergyman, all attended church twice on Sunday and there were family prayers morning and evening. There were class singing lessons and natural history was taught by means of lectures. Each girl had three arithmetic lessons a week, varying in length in the different grades and using the *Irish Society's Books*. All except Class 1 took English Grammar, History and Geography in four groups, with four half-hour lessons a week. For History, they used the *Guides to Roman, Greek and Scripture History* by the Rev. J. Goldsmith and E. C. Brewer. Dr. James Cornwell's books *Geography for Beginners* and *Grammar for Beginners* were also used. S.P.C.K. publications were used in the teaching of reading. English composition was taught only in the top class, but needlework and practice in reading and writing continued throughout the school. In the first year, with the average age only nine years, most of the teaching was oral and concentrated on reading, writing and arithmetic with the usual Bible studies, using the *Bible* and *Bible Studies*, *Bible History*, *Peep of Day* and the *Second Book of Lessons*. In the second year, the girls also read *The Circle of Knowledge*, Nelson's *Lessons on Common Things* and the *Third Irish Book*. Mr. Stanton also noted that there was a Library open to all the girls.

All except the first year prepared three exercises a week on each of their subjects during evening prep. when each girl sat at her desk in the school room supervised by one of the Mistresses. The main criticism of the school room was that the desks should have backs and these were later fitted.

Sixteen girls in turn were employed as domestic servants in the house and all the girls were employed on Saturdays in cleaning and housework. Punishments, which could be given by all the Teachers, were impositions and deprivation of holidays. By this time, girls' schools had lost the tradition of corporal punishment, but rules might be many and very strictly enforced, especially those which imposed long periods of silence. At Red Maids' there were two hours daily for play, but the playground was only seventy feet square, part of it roofed, so that it provided inadequate space or fresh air

and there was a teacher always on duty there. Three hours were set aside on Mondays for a longer walk accompanied by the Teachers.

The Grammar School and Queen Elizabeth's Hospital were both efficient and well managed and the boys at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital 'excellently taught.' It was also noticed that the selection of pupils was fairly carried out, with no political corruption, a statement at variance with Mr. Fitch's later charges concerning the Bristol Schools. Since the Trustees had already re-housed two of the schools and received Parliamentary approval to divert considerable charitable funds to the two boys' schools, they might expect a reasonable report on their work, unlike Hull Grammar School, for example, where 'Everything about the school is in exactly the same state in which it was 300 years ago, except, of course, that it is 300 years the worse for wear.'²⁵

The Endowed Schools Act was passed in 1867 and was debated by the Trustees in the Autumn of that year. They eventually decided to prepare new Schemes for the management of the Schools and, on 8 October, set up a committee to consider their preparation. The Commissioners felt that their investigations had proved that 'there are few endowments which are put to the best use and very many which are working to little or bad use,' and that this particularly applied to girls' schools. Miss Buss had reported that there were 'scarcely any good schools . . . very few good teachers, there is no motive offered to girls to study.'²⁶ The Commissioners were constrained by Section 32 of the Act to consult the Trustees and make some general public enquiries before preparing any Schemes and then to give some time for public discussion. Mr. Fitch, the Assistant Commissioner, visited Bristol early in March, 1870, to discuss with the Trustees their ideas for reform but, by this time, the Trustees had decided on a majority vote not to co-operate and had no ideas to submit. Instead, Mr. Fitch's tentative proposals were 'leaked' to the press as if they were a firm and unalterable plan which would be forced on the Bristol Schools in defiance of local opinion.

On 17 March, 1870, Mr. Fitch wrote to protest that 'on the first overture, a plan hardly even in embryo has been treated as though it were complete, hasty apprehensions formed of it have been published to the world and the public of Bristol has been invoked to take part in the agitation of the question.' The Commissioners would look to the public to support 'an enactment which brings them great benefits.' When the Schemes were ready they would be deposited for public comment and objections. The Taunton Report had condemned hospital schools as a class and two of the three Bristol Schools had been named in the Act as needing reform. The Commissioners

took the view that, except for a few needy children, the provision of free board, lodging and clothes for children whose parents could afford to pay for it was mistaken; a point made to the Red Maids' Governors by the Inspectors several times since then.

The Commissioners felt that the hospital schools were bad for the children, 'who should be brought up in families, not in flocks,' and bad for parents who were encouraged to shed all their responsibility when their children were provided for without effort or merit on the part of parents or children. Those who alleged the spoliation of the poor should consider how the Act would work in Bristol where three schools with a combined income of over £14,000 a year educated only 436 children out of a population of 160,000. The object of the Commissioners was to provide higher grade schools to which boys and girls could graduate at the age of fifteen or sixteen. For the poor who could not afford to pay, the ancient endowments would provide scholarships and bursaries at all stages. Promotion would be entirely on merit and able children would be able to proceed on Exhibitions to the Universities and into the professions. Mr. Fitch concluded his letter by reminding the Trustees that it was his job to apply the principles laid down by Parliament to the educational endowments of Bristol, but said that he was very willing to convey to the Commissioners any argument based on local knowledge or the welfare of the City which would justify an exception.

In January, 1871, the Red Maids' Governors voted on a resolution to be sent to the Commissioners. They wished to continue to provide clothing and maintenance since the children did come from very poor families. There were no indiscriminate free admissions and the entrance examination was a test of merit. There was no system of patronage and they wished the endowments to be applied as before. In this unique situation the names and votes are recorded – eight were in favour and seven against. In August, the Trustees published the Commissioners' Scheme and their own objections to it. They did not think it wise to pool all the charitable funds under a new body, 'The Bristol United Schools,' since they wished to keep separate the hospital schools which served the poor of the city. They feared that, if all the schools were open to parents who could pay, the middle classes would take over the endowments meant for the poor. They accepted the idea of setting up extra day schools but objected to the payment of fees, the considerable reduction in the number of orphans and poor children, the proposal to admit day scholars and the relaxation of the residence qualification in the Foundation's boarding schools.

A compromise seems to have been reached in November when a revised Scheme was prepared and a proof copy sent by Mr. Fitch to the Trustees, 'which, in the opinion of the Board differs essentially in spirit and in letter' from the suggestions put forward in August. However, it seems that the dispute was not resolved until the return of a Tory Government in 1874.²⁷ Mr. Fitch continued the debate in a long article in the *Westminster Review* of April, 1873. He attacked the Charity Schools because of their treatment of the children and their low standards, especially for girls. 'The educational aim in schools of this class is never high. The life lived in them is for the most part joyless and uninteresting. The children are dressed in a hideous costume; they are subject to many restraints of a humiliating kind which are presumed to be appropriate to a Charity School.' He renewed the accusation of patronage at Bristol, writing that, 'Mr. Stanton was informed that the boys at the two Bristol schools are mostly sons of the workmen or servants of the Electors.' There is no evidence of this whatsoever and, in fact, Stanton, in his report, says just the opposite. On the other hand, Fitch praised Christ's Hospital, where admission was by the nomination of great men in the City of London and where the girls' school was barely managing to survive.

The battle raged also in the Bristol newspapers. *The Western Daily Press* supported the plans of the Commissioners. Of the Red Maids' School, the paper commented, 'Alterations are most decidedly wanting and sweeping ones, too.' It was scandalous that the funds of the School could not be better applied. 'They learn the 3 Rs, saying the Catechism and bobbing a curtsy. And thus £3,000 is spent, just for the sake of supplying Clifton people with servants (about 15 per annum) warranted to have as little education as possible and to know how to "keep their Place."' If a father wanted a better job for his daughter when she left at eighteen, he must send her to school. On 2 April, 1872, the new scheme was discussed, especially the proposed higher grade school for girls. Once the schools had been reformed, the public would marvel at 'the folly which could desire to prevent the development of medieval hospitals into institutions suited to our modern life and requirements.' However, it would seem that many of the correspondents of the *Times and Mirror* would hardly have been surprised if Mr. Fitch had appeared in Bristol sporting horns and a tail. They believed that endowments belonging to Bristol would be transferred to other areas; that money left for the benefit of the poor was about to be stolen by the middle-class and that the 'bureaucratic tyranny of London' was once more trying to dominate the rest of the country. The Editor ended one tirade by recalling Marshal Blucher's visit to London

after Waterloo, 'Mine Gott, (sic) what a City to sack! Mine Gott, what a Charity to sack, to confiscate and spoil.'²⁸

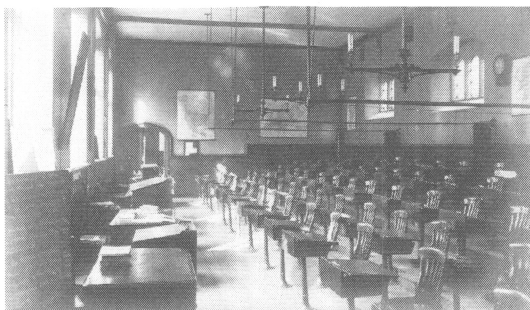
The scheme which was finally accepted for the Red Maids' School and Queen Elizabeth's Hospital received the approval of the Queen in Council in May, 1875. It envisaged sometime in the future, 'So soon as the Trust Funds shall suffice and circumstances will permit,' the setting up of six schools at secondary level in Bristol: Queen Elizabeth's Hospital for Boys (boarding), Queen Elizabeth's Day School for boys aged seven to fifteen or sixteen, and Carr's Day School for Boys aged sixteen to eighteen. The Red Maids' School would remain a boarding school but at a higher grade and would move into the country within easy reach of Bristol. Whitson's Day School would occupy the Denmark Street Building, taking as many girls as possible between the ages of seven and fifteen or sixteen. There would also be a higher grade school for girls possibly in the St. Philip's or St. James' area. There were to be only eighty Red Maids, of which fifty would be orphans, 15 would come from Bristol elementary schools and fifteen from the Whitson's Day School. Orphans were to enter at the age of eight to ten and the others between ten and twelve. All were to leave at fifteen; though there were clauses which allowed the Governors to permit girls of special promise to stay longer. All must have been born or resident for three years in the Parliamentary borough of Bristol. The entrance examination must be of the same standard as that at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital. Tuition fees at the Day Schools would be 30s. 0d. to £3 a year in the lower school and £3 to £5 in the higher grade school but a large number of exhibitions would be available for poor children of merit.

There were provisions concerning the choice of Governors, with four ladies to be co-opted to the governing body for the girls' schools. Other clauses dealt with staff salaries, pension schemes for Head Teachers, the jurisdiction of Head Teachers over academic matters, the payment of fees, awards and exhibitions and a conscience clause concerning Religious teaching and church-going.

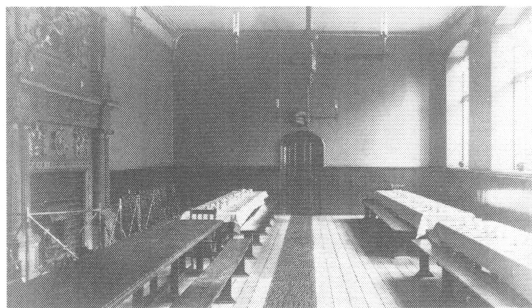
The subjects to be taught in the two higher grade schools included, besides reading, writing and arithmetic, Religious Instruction, drawing and class singing, History and Geography, English grammar, composition and literature, Elements of Mathematics, Natural Science and French or Latin or both, Domestic Economy and the Laws of Health, Needlework and 'if the Governors think fit, Telegraphy or other branch of science having a bearing on skilled industry suitable for women.'²⁹



(a)



(b)



(c)

Denmark Street, 1843–1911, (a) the quadrangle, (b) the schoolroom,
(c) the dining room

The new Governors opened a new Minute Book in 1875. Its front cover carries the legend, *The Red Maids' School and Girls' Day Schools Minute Book No. 1*. It runs from 1875 to January 1896, but attention had turned to the elementary schools and the pressure on the endowed schools was ended as responsibility for them was returned to Chancery. The question of the removal of the Red Maids from Denmark Street continued to be discussed from time to time during the next thirty years but was always shelved. In 1882, the governors decided to keep the boarding school in Denmark Street and set up a day-school elsewhere. They even viewed sites such as Portland Square and Merrywood Hall but none seemed suitable. In 1885, Assistant Commissioner Fearon wrote that the Charity Commission were unable to accept such a change in the Scheme. They recognized the expediency of establishing the two day schools without delay, but 'they think that the obligation of removing a boarding school for girls of tender age from the centre of a crowded manufacturing City to a more open site at the earliest possible opportunity ought to remain the first duty to be undertaken under this Scheme and are unwilling to contemplate the long delay which the prior establishment of a Girl's Day School on this Foundation would entail.'

Others in the city regretted the delay in implementing the Scheme. Canon Percival complained to the Select Committee of 1886 that in Bristol very little had been done to get a fair share of education for girls. Two large day schools might have been established 'some years ago, if there had been proper machinery for expediting and promoting it.'³⁸

The girls' health remained a recurrent problem. They were all vaccinated and had to bring back certificates at the end of each holiday that there had been no infectious disease in the household. Part of the problem was the lack of fresh air and exercise. New taller buildings in the area of Denmark Street overlooked the school and cut off air and light. For some years, the Governors paid £10 a year for regular visits to the Zoo. The Head Mistress was authorized to buy skipping ropes and balls and, from 1882, they had a regular drill instructor. Later, there was Swedish drill for the seniors while the juniors went for a walk on the Downs. Swimming was introduced in the 1890s and Mrs. Rose Palmer remembered how they loved going each week to the Victoria Baths at Clifton, undoing their buttons on the tram. 'We unbuttoned, unhooked or untied all we could *en route* and held our garments together with both hands under our coats.' They would then undress as quickly as possible, slip into their hired bathing suits and 'go helter-skelter down the steps,' so as to spend as long as possible in the water.³¹

There were cases of scarlet fever in the school from time to time and a serious epidemic of influenza in 1907. Ringworm seems to have been endemic there and there was so bad an attack in 1903 that the Governors isolated the sick girls in a house on St. Michael's Hill with a nurse and regular visits from a doctor. In May, 1888, the Governors called in the Bristol Medical Officer of Health to investigate the causes of the sore throat 'to which so many scholars were subject during their residence at the school.' As a result of his report, urgent drainage work was carried out at the school between summer and Christmas 1888. The entire system had to be renewed, all the drains carried outside and ventilated, all waste pipes carried outside and manholes provided for inspection and cleansing. In later years, Mr. Wills supervised the cleaning and repair of the drains every year during the summer holiday. In 1878, water was laid on to the landings outside the dormitories and at the end of the century, more baths were installed. A school dentist was appointed in 1892 and there was a new doctor in 1903. Efforts were made to make the school yard more attractive with virginia creeper and other plants growing up the walls.³²

With the spread of elementary education in the City the school became a higher grade school. Miss Browne retired and Miss F. L. Roberts was appointed from January, 1876, with an extra assistant Mistress. A new time-table was adopted, the subjects including telegraphy, taught by Mr. Sampson. Mr. Edward Cook taught music and singing. One of the new Lady Governors pressed the necessity of providing backs to the forms in the schoolroom, where there was also a new desk for the Mistress and 'sunk inkstands for the use of the children.' £43. 2s. 8d. was spent on new books and the Governors approved a scheme for outside examiners to judge the girls' work in an annual examination in general subjects, needlework and domestic science. £10 a year was set aside for prizes, awarded for a high standard of work and conduct. As the girls did not have time for so many domestic tasks, a housekeeper was to be appointed and an additional housemaid and scullery maid.³³

The number of girls was back to eighty by 1881 and, as they left at fifteen, the school was much easier to manage. Miss Roberts' discipline was strict but fair. Her leaving reports range from 'good' and 'very good' to 'satisfactory' and 'very troublesome.' She was energetic in obtaining clothes, books, stationery, brushes and combs, household goods and other necessities for the girls.³⁴ The responsibilities of a Head Mistress in the 1880s were legion. Few had formal qualifications but they were by

no means uneducated. Most were well read in Bible studies and English Literature, many had travelled abroad and some spoke several languages. The Head must supervise the teaching and teach several subjects herself, from French to Needlework; supervise mealtimes; encourage the production of plays and concerts; organize picnics, rambles and the annual outing, and often be ready to read aloud to the girls from poetry or novels. The Association of Headmistresses of Endowed and Proprietary Schools was set up in 1874 and there was certainly a corresponding group in Bristol.³⁵

With plenty of interesting and demanding work, the girls had little time or wish to plan mischief or to abscond. In 1879, Miss Roberts wrote to the Governors of her intention, with their approval, to present some of the girls for the Cambridge Local Examinations, which had been permanently opened to girls about twelve years earlier. In 1881, also, some Red Maids were entered for the Local Examinations in Freehand Drawing of the Science and Art Department at South Kensington. The Governors then applied to the Charity Commissioners to amend the Scheme to allow girls to stay until the end of the term in which they were sixteen, with power to the Governors, on the recommendation of the Head Mistress, to permit girls to remain in the school until they were seventeen, as a reward for merit, 'including therein intellectual proficiency and good conduct.' Eventually, the Commissioners agreed that up to eight girls might stay on, and so the 'extended age class' came into being, with girls staying, not because everyone had to stay, but from choice, because they were training for a useful career.³⁶

New equipment was purchased for the school; a microscope, a cabinet containing zoological specimens, exercise and drawing books, books for science teaching and manuals of history. Mr. Peake, one of the masters at the Grammar School, came several times a week to teach the girls mathematics and Mr. Tribe was asked to advise on the teaching of book-keeping. Exhibitions of £25 were granted in 1881 to Ada Hanover and Louisa Chaffin to go to the Home and Colonial Training College in London and Lilian Cox was able to stay at school as a pupil teacher and later received £50 to enable her to continue her studies at the University College at Bristol.³⁷

It became usual for girls to stay on as student teachers. They received £2 a year and the Head Mistress was to receive £5 for 'instruction to be imparted by her to the Girl.' The students wore a modified uniform, with white fichus instead of tippets. Annie Misson was the first of several Red Maids who went, with an Exhibition of £50, to Fraulein B. Melsbach's school in Germany, to teach some English and to improve her German.

Other girls received leaving Exhibitions 'to aid them to acquire the technical knowledge necessary for the performance of their duties' as telegraphists at the District Post Office in Bristol. A group of Red Maids exhibited the use of 'certain Telegraphic Apparatus' at the Exhibition of Women's Industries in Bristol in February, 1885. In 1884, The Governors, obviously interested in the new careers available to the girls, asked the Clerk to compile a list of the occupations of those who had left in the previous four years. Domestic service still took ten girls; eight became teachers, six telegraph clerks and four dressmakers or milliners. Four others became assistants in shops or warehouses, two exhibitioners were studying at University College, Bristol, two went to help at home and one emigrated. Over the whole period between 1875 and 1895, thirty-one went into service; twenty-one to dress-making, tailoring or millinery; fifteen to help at home (some of these because of ill-health); eleven became teachers; six were telegraph clerks; six went to learn a business or trade; five started work in a shop; three became nurses, and one emigrated.³⁸ Each girl received a leaving certificate signed by the mistress and by the Governors. Their academic attainments were classified into first, second and third class. Needlework was graded excellent, very good, good and so on, and conduct from excellent to fair or troublesome. The girls continued to take the Cambridge Local Examinations at Junior and Senior level and usually had some first class with honours in each division. In addition to the school subjects, there was a class in dress-making and a group went every week to the School of Cookery in Great George Street, 'A great event, as it meant going out in the evening,' and they 'were allowed to take the dishes home for supper if they were suitable.' By this time there were several daily women and a resident laundress to wash, mangle and iron, though the girls took turns with the ironing. The fitting of new bonnets each year was quite a ceremony, and the cloaks in black and red check were chosen by the Lady Governors. Hair was worn short until the age of fourteen when it was 'put up' in what was known as a 'bird's nest.'³⁹

At the prize-giving early in 1889, there were two special prizes of books for Alice Kirby and Ellen Ada Martifee, 'in recognition of the great distinction obtained by them in the recent College of Preceptors Examination, they having been placed at the head of the list of candidates from all England.' In 1891, in the same examination, Alice Smith achieved First Class Honours, with distinctions in Scripture, Drawing and Music and Kate Haynes won First Class Honours with distinction in Scripture and Drawing. In 1892, Isabella Gaylard, one of the student teachers, won a College of Preceptors'

scholarship for intending teachers to the Home and Colonial College in London. She returned to the school as assistant mistress and served there until her retirement in 1935. By the end of the century, more than half the girls became teachers. Typing and shorthand were substituted for telegraphy in 1892 and some of the girls took the Pitman's examinations. Others continued to win high honours in the Cambridge Local and College of Preceptors' Examinations.⁴⁰

In 1886, the Schools Committee drew up a revised list of subjects for the entrance examination. Girls from Elementary Schools must read 'with intelligence a few lines of poetry or prose and must be able to write a few lines of dictation accurately. In English Grammar, they must be able to parse a simple English sentence and, in Arithmetic, they must know compound rules, common weights and measures, simple proportion and simple fractions'. The examination for orphans was easier since they entered the school at an earlier age.⁴¹

In March, that year, the Schools Committee reported on 'the efficiency of the existing Staff to carry out the requirements of the Scheme.' There were criticisms to be made but the Head Mistress seemed happy to continue with the present Staff, providing that she continued to receive help with the teaching of mathematics. Before the matter could be discussed further, Miss Roberts became seriously ill. For a time, in late 1886, she seemed to recover, but, after three operations, she returned to the school and died there in November. The Governors, who had paid all her expenses in hospital and convalescence, recorded their sense of loss, 'as also the great ability, the untiring energy and devotion, and the watchful care for the welfare of the children under her charge.' The whole school was taken to Arnos Vale for the burial ceremony.⁴²

'Soon, Miss Bowen arrived on the scene, with her tiny waist and high clicking heels, and so very strict, or so I thought,' wrote Miss Kate Mees in 1953. She was 'a little lady, of whom we stood in the utmost awe.' Miss Bowen taught the upper forms Scripture, English Grammar and Literature, and Miss Mees recalled that, 'If some of us had not prepared our lessons as well as we might have done, a little diversion was caused by the whisper of the word 'mouse' and the little lady, with a lift of her skirts and a cry of horror, mounted on to her chair and the class broke up in confusion or was, at any rate, considerably reduced in length by the time that order was restored.'⁴³

Miss Bowen set about improving the school with her usual energy. Soon eighty new desks were purchased, fixed and varnished. The usual cleaning

and repairs that summer included new curtains and the opening of the top half of all the blocked windows on the Denmark Street front of the school. The schoolroom was divided into four classes with new curtains which could be drawn back for evening prep. Miss Bowen recommended that Latin should be taught in the school but there is no evidence that it was introduced at this time. The girls helped to make a set of new dresses of red merino cloth and there were new cloaks and bonnets.

The daily routine changed very little, except that lessons replaced the hours of needlework. At six-thirty, the girls were awakened by the ringing of the big bell in the Quadrangle. They got up, washed and dressed and stripped their beds, folding each item separately. The Mistress on duty came in and everyone knelt for a few moments of private devotions. At seven-fifteen, prayers were read by the Mistress in the schoolroom. Breakfast was at eight and always consisted of bread and butter and tea. The girls still held 'offices' for a term at a time; waiting at table, washing-up, or cleaning the school or the dormitories. The dormitory girls also filled the washbasins on the table down the centre of each dormitory at half past five in the evening and, by eight-thirty, when the girls went to bed, there was sometimes a film of ice on the water.

Morning school began at nine and continued, with a fifteen minute break, until twelve. Tuesday and Thursday mornings after break were set aside for drill or a walk. Dinner was a hot meal with no pudding or a cold meal with pudding. Pudding was often rice, but a special favourite was a baked bread pudding which had a thick layer of treacle at the bottom of the dish and, when served, was almost like toffee. A similar pudding was also a favourite in the 1930s. Sunday dinner was always cold meat followed by pastry, usually apple tart.

Afternoon lessons occupied the time from two until five and tea, with bread and butter, or sometimes dripping or treacle, was at a quarter to six. Cake appeared only twice a year, on Whitson's Day and on Miss Bowen's Birthday. Prep. was from six-fifteen to seven-thirty, with each girl silent at her own desk in the schoolroom. Supper of milk and bread was available then, followed by prayers and then bed for everyone at eight-thirty. Mrs. Rose Palmer remembered the singing from the 'Bunch of Grapes,' next door and the sound of street buskers singing *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Il Trovatore* in the street below. There were no organized games, but jumping boards and various toys were purchased for the playground from time to time. However, the school timetable left little time for play and it was considered unladylike

to shout. The little ones congregated sometimes in the boot-room to play childish games and sometimes, on a Saturday night, the older girls enjoyed a sing-song, sitting on the floor round the dining-room fire, with songs like, 'Oft in the still night,' 'Sweet and Low,' and 'In the Gloaming.' There was a school library, to which the Governors contributed about £5 a year for new books and replacements, but it was not very large, 'and we had not much time for reading, anyway.'

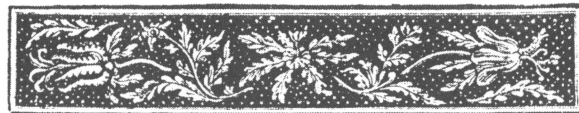
On Sundays, the girls were expected to learn the Collect for the Day and part of the Gospel and they still attended Church twice on Sunday at the Mayor's Chapel on College Green. On Sunday afternoons, Miss Bowen read to them for an hour which they very much enjoyed, her usual choice being historical novels, such as those of Emma Marshall and Evelyn Everett Green. There was a sixteen-page novelette entitled *Rosie Sweetapple or The Little Red Maid*. The covers and the title page are missing and the printer's records were destroyed in 1940, but it is very much in the style of Mrs. Emma Marshall, who lived at 'Woodside,' Leigh Woods, near Bristol, from 1882 to 1898 and wrote several novels about Bristol during these years. She was a very prolific writer of shilling novels and stories for girls and was, herself, interested in a home for friendless girls in Cheltenham and so may well have visited the Red Maids' School while she was living near Bristol. The story begins –

The light of autumn afternoon fell low and golden across the court of the Red Maids' School in old Bristol, warming into a richer glow of colour the scarlet frocks of the little red maids as they sat busily knitting under the sunny wall, making their aprons and tippets look quite dazzling in their whiteness, making the steel knitting-needles glitter like diamond points and bars, and even touching up the coarse blue yarn they knitted into a soft purple hue. The court was filled with the merry laughter and chatter of the girls, whose tongues moved as nimbly as their needles – perhaps more so.⁴⁰

By the end of the century, the holiday on the first Monday of the month had been discontinued as too unsettling, but, in addition to the normal school holidays, Shrove Tuesday, Mothering Sunday and the day after Founder's Day were holidays for the girls. Parents were allowed to visit on the girl's birthday and they could bring sweets. Occasionally, a party went to the theatre, for example to a performance of *Julius Caesar* at the Prince's Theatre



"MISTRESS HAS GIVEN ME LEAVE TO TAKE YOU WITH ME TO THE CATHEDRAL SERVICE." *Page 9.*



ROSIE SWEETAPPLE.

THE light of autumn afternoon feil low and golden across the court of the Red Maids' School in old Bristol, warming into a richer glow of colour the scarlet frocks of the little red maids as they sat busily knitting under the sunny wall, making their aprons and tippets look quite dazzling in their whiteness, making the steel knitting-needles glitter like diamond points and bars, and even touching up the coarse blue yarn they knitted into a soft purply hue. The court was filled with the merry laughter and chatter of the girls, whose tongues moved as nimbly as their needles—perhaps more so.

You would see the same old school still, and the same pretty quaint costume, and hear the same merry music of young voices now. Not the same voices, though, for it is an afternoon a hundred years ago that I am thinking about.

But not quite all the girls were merry. One sat a little apart from the others, where she could catch a glimpse of the river and the shipping. Somehow that

on 10 October, 1903, since it was the play set for the Cambridge Local Examination that year. They also went each year to see the Spring Exhibition at the Fine Arts Academy. Sometimes, they visited other exhibitions such as Hengler's Circus in Park Row and the 'Myrioramas' mounted each Christmas by the Poole Brothers. A Royal visit to the City, a Marriage or a Coronation always brought a holiday and often a reserved place from which to watch the procession. Once a year, Miss Fry invited them to Goldney House at Clifton to enjoy the Grotto and the lovely gardens. The annual outing was a great event and usually reported in the local papers. The girls travelled in three four-horse brakes to Cleve or to Congresbury Woods accompanied by Miss Bowen and some of the Mistresses, the Secretary and Mr. Sampson, and some of the Trustees. Miss Mees recalled, 'We roamed around the woods and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. The catering was usually done by Milton of Clifton, who provided a very appetizing and dainty lunch.' One year, they went to Tintern and explored the Abbey and its grounds and also walked to the Wynd Cliff. On another occasion they went to Weston by train, but Miss Bowen was so horrified when the girls wanted to paddle that they never went there again.

The great day of the year was always Founder's Day, November 19. Preparations began well beforehand, stoning raisins for the pudding, practising the music for the service, scrubbing the schoolroom, polishing the furniture and arranging the flowers. All Red Maids know the smell of chrysanthemums and wood smoke which always takes them back to Founder's Day. In the morning, the girls put on their best straw bonnets, with the wide navy ribbons and white goffered frill and their best cloaks. They waited until they heard the fife and drum band of the Queen Elizabeth's Hospital boys and could walk out to College Green to join them. They then marched in procession across the Centre and along Baldwin Street to St. Nicholas' Church for the Whitson Day Service. On their return to the school, girls, Staff and Governors met for the usual reading of extracts from the Will and the gift of a new shilling to each girl. The traditional dinner of roast veal, with seasoning and vegetables and plum pudding afterwards, was followed by a free afternoon. Then, in the evening, Mr. Cook always organised a concert of music and singing by the girls and by local musicians who were his friends and Mr. Thomas was often there to entertain the girls with his comic monologues.

In November, 1905, Miss Bowen announced her intention to resign and the Governors asked her to stay until the end of the summer holidays

in 1906. Some of the girls thought her strict, but she had a real concern for their welfare. A correspondence between her and an old pupil shows her great affection for 'her Girls'. She wrote to her 'darling little Dora' of her delight at the success of all fourteen candidates in the Cambridge Local Examinations of 1893; thanked her for birthday and Christmas cards and finally arranged a job for her as a shorthand typist in the office of Mr. Whitwill in Queen Square. She regularly invited the old girls to the school 'for a chat' and told them, 'I love to see my very dear former pupils.' During her last year at the school, in the spring of 1906, she had a good deal to do with the setting up of the Old Girls' Society, writing, 'It is very good of you to offer your kindly aid, and I shall enclose a list of names with past addresses. If in your leisure(?) moments you could get at even two or three, it will be something.' Later, she wrote from Cheltenham wishing she could 'look in at one of your meetings.' By July, 1906, the Old Girls' Society was established and the Governors gave £10 to the Secretary of the 'lately formed Red Maids' School Old Girls' Society.'⁴⁵

In the thirty years between the visit of the Charity Commissioners and the retirement of Miss Bowen, the school had changed a great deal and was preparing for the very different demands and opportunities of the new century.

CHAPTER V

War and Peace.

At the beginning of 1906, the Headship of the Red Maids' School was advertised in *The Times*, *The Spectator*, *Education* and in the three Bristol papers. The list of requirements is notable as still not including any educational or academic qualifications. The salary was to be £200 a year and residence in the school, with arrangements for a pension fund. Applicants must not be over forty years of age. The Governors were unanimous in choosing Miss Marion Webb, assistant Mistress at the Training College at Fishponds. She was to remain at the school until 1934 and the school at Westbury on Trym was largely her creation.

She began at once. After a conference with the Lady Governors, the calico combinations and striped twill petticoat, the stays and the ugly grey worsted stockings were replaced by soft vests and neat navy knickers with white detachable linings and smart black stockings. Instead of the thick cream flannel skirt and the very uncomfortable stiff, high canvas collar, there were shorter skirts and shirt-blouses with soft Peter Pan collars and modern sleeves with cuffs and, in summer, red and white striped cotton blouses. In this, Miss Webb was following the example of Cheltenham, where tight stays, high heels and pointed toes had been banished and woollen combinations and cotton summer dresses, with comfortable stockings and shoes had been introduced. At North London, even Miss Buss had told a startled parent that warm combinations were more important than gaining matric and that view certainly lingered into the 1930s at the Red Maids' School. In 1907, the outdoor dress in summer was still the white linen tippet and apron, white gloves and straw bonnet. The winter dress was a very warm and cosy coat of red and black check woollen material which was rainproof and an overcape of the same material with a ruffle at the neck, navy woollen gloves and black shoes. The girls bathed once a week, but washed stripped to the waist, every morning and evening in basins at the long centre table in each dormitory. When it was very cold and the water icy, they would warm their flannel skirts on the hot water tank in the lobby and run back to put them in the beds to warm them.¹

The girls enjoyed Swedish drill in a hall on Blackboy Hill, though they had to walk there and back, being given the tram fare only on wet days.

Hockey and netball soon followed, 'Miss Webb never did things by halves.' There was hockey practice on the Downs and, later, matches against other schools. Swimming also was continued. For the four student teachers, there was a two-term science course at the University College and a new, large book-case was fixed in Miss Webb's study to provide a small specialized library for the Staff and senior girls. An art teacher was engaged, Miss Gaylard was granted £10 towards the cost of a holiday course in Paris on teaching French and Mr. Sampson was given £20 for writing his history of the school. Each year, in July, there was to be an 'open day' and a display of the girls' work to which all the parents would be invited.²

The results in the Cambridge Local Examinations in 1907 were excellent. Two seniors and two juniors won first class honours and there were twenty-seven distinctions; ten in Religious Knowledge, with one junior and one senior second in the order of merit for all England. There were nine distinctions in History, taking nine of the first thirteen places on the list. The five distinctions in Physiology and Hygiene were the only ones granted in the subject that year and there were three distinctions in English.³

It was decided to invite the Board of Education to inspect the school in 1908. The Inspectors arrived on 30 January and met the Governors the next day. As a result of their report, the Governors applied to the Board for an amendment to the scheme to allow them to use the accumulated revenue of £15,000 for acquiring a new site and buildings and also to relieve them finally from setting up a girls' day school under the provisions of the old scheme. In July, 1909, they applied to the Board of Education for recognition of the school as efficient, but the Board refused to grant recognition until all the Inspectors' suggestions had been carried out. It may be that the girls' health in Denmark Street was again causing concern. There had been a severe epidemic of influenza in 1907 and, in 1908, four girls were at Ham Green with scarlet fever. Charity Commissioners and Inspectors had never approved of the Denmark Street site which was increasingly hemmed in by tall buildings and there had been a serious fire at the Merchant Venturers' College in 1905, when the girls had had to leave the building.⁴

On 10 November, 1908, the Chairman of the Governors, with Mr. Worsley and Mr. Thomas met the Hon. W. N. Bruce at the Board of Education. They were advised that, if they wished for recognition, the scheme should be altered to allow girls to stay until they were eighteen and that the Board required the assurance of the governors that the school would be removed to a more suitable building. The Board did not desire to make

changes that had not the approval of the Governors, but, if application had been made before Christmas and the Board was satisfied on these points, recognition might be backdated to August, 1908. The Chairman, reporting to the Governors the following week, said that Messrs. Sturge had already been asked to consider the Portbury lands as a possible site for the new school. Further meetings approved the re-drafting of the scheme to delete all references to the girls' day schools; to allow girls to remain to eighteen, particularly those wishing to become teachers, and to provide a suitable building for the eighty boarders.

A Miscellaneous Minute Book shows that a sub-committee of Governors had already recommended a move in 1905 and, by 1907, several houses were being considered. Nine more houses were viewed in the autumn of 1908, including 'Burfield,' Sir Robert Symes' house at Westbury. This was regarded as a suitable site for the school and the committee visited the house on Saturday, 12 December, 1909, with Mr. Wills as architect to advise them. They decided that it should be acquired, subject to the approval of the Board of Education and provided that it could be secured on reasonable terms. Mr. Tribe undertook to look into the figures with Mr. Sampson to see how much was available for the purchase of buildings and equipment, while Miss Webb was to visit other schools to enquire into the cost of building and of suitable furnishings.⁵

The Board of Education, in granting recognition to the school for two years only from August, 1908, wished to be assured that it would not be more satisfactory to purchase a vacant site and erect new buildings and that the Governors had a reasonable prospect of carrying out their plan and retaining enough income to carry on the school. The plans they had received were too tentative and probably too expensive. Mr. Wills then prepared detailed plans and costings to be sent to the Board with a letter from the Governors and, by May 1910, the plans had been approved, a contract signed with the builder and the Clerk of Works appointed.⁶

Meanwhile, in Denmark Street, the School continued as usual throughout 1910. Twelve girls were confirmed with the approval of their parents; Latin was introduced for a few girls taking the Civil Service examinations; eight girls went to the Bristol Education Committee as student teachers and others took up leaving Exhibitions tenable at the Fishponds Diocesan Training College. Founder's Day was celebrated on 22 November and Mrs. Capp describes the preparations. The older girls scrubbed the floors and polished the brass grate of 'the famous fireplace,' while others helped to arrange the

masses of chrysanthemums. The psalms and hymns had been practised with Mr. Cook for weeks beforehand. After the service, prize-giving and the presentation of shillings, there was a 'sumptuous Christmas dinner,' and then a free afternoon. The evening concert began at six-fortyfive and a copy of the Programme has survived. The girls sang traditional and folk songs as well as part songs and solos. The visiting soloists were Miss Gladys Simpson and Miss Evelyn Gerrish, Mr. Francis Wensley and Mr. Edward Cook, 'our singing master.' Mr. Maurice Alexander played two violin solos, marked 'lovely' by the girl whose programme it was. Finally, Mr. Charlie Thomas contributed two of his humorous songs which were great favourites.⁷

In December, 1910, a special meeting of the Governors approved the purchase of the fittings for 'Burfield.' Eighty wooden cupboards for the cloakroom cost £48 9s. 0d., the combined washstands and wardrobes for the dormitories were 35s. 0d. each, fittings for the science room cost £107 8s. 6d. and those for the cookery room £34 18s. 6d. The room over the laundry in the Stable block was to be a drying room, with special heating, and the clock in the school quadrangle at Denmark Street was to be removed and fixed in the gable of the laundry. The smaller fireplace from St. Nicholas Street was removed to the entrance hall at 'Burfield' and Mr. Chattock paid the cost of moving the large fireplace to the central hall there. A road was made to the yard at the back of the house, windows in the beautiful Staff dining room were partially bricked up to provide window seats and there were many other useful details, such as curtains and towel rails, hot and cold water to all the pantries and the girls gave up their annual outing to provide a flag-pole.

1911 was an exciting year. Mr. Titcomb's picture of the Red Maids in the Mayor's Chapel was hung at the Royal Academy. Three girls were presented for the Higher Cambridge Certificate, ten for the Senior Local Examination and fifteen for the Junior Local. Evelyn Begbie, a former scholar and a leaving Exhibitioner, was first of the 641 candidates in the Archbishop's Examination in Religious Knowledge of candidates for admission to Training Colleges. Miss Webb attended the annual conference of Head Mistresses at Wakefield and the first graduate Mistress was appointed to the school. The new King, George V, decreed an extra week's holiday for all the schools and each Red Maid had two new cotton dresses to wear that summer. Finally, the formal opening of the new school was fixed for Monday, 16 October, 'being the 277th anniversary of the first admission of Girls on the Foundation.'⁸

At the end of term, on June 12, Mr. Chattock came to the school to speak to the girls. At first, he talked of the Coronation, which was to be the next day.

Then he turned to their own future school life. 'This is the last time that I shall speak to you in your old School Room, perhaps the last time I shall see you all gathered together in Denmark Street.' They faced a great change in their lives and more responsibility, especially for the older girls. 'You will be living in a new and beautiful country home, you will be doing new things, enjoying new pleasures, possibly learning new subjects.' 'Yours is a noble inheritance. You have a great tradition behind you, and now to you will fall the duty of transplanting that tradition . . . the fame of your School for its high aims and ideals, its standard of conduct and work has gone out far beyond Bristol. You must carry it on farther still and not only maintain its standard but strengthen it.' There were 'old memories to cherish, happy ones to form afresh and a happy, good and successful School to make.'⁹

The move to Westbury on Trym took place during the summer holiday but, on the first night of the new term, the girls were saddened by the death of the Matron, Mrs. Ure, and they were all sent home again for a few days. Mrs. Ure, though appearing strict, had been very good to girls in the sick-room, tending them day and night. One girl remembered a quiet voice and long brown plaits and a doll which had belonged to Mrs. Ure's own children.¹⁰

The Dedication of the new school by the Bishop of Bristol took place on 16 October, with all the traditional hymns and prayers, including Psalm 127 'Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it.' *The Bristol Times and Mirror* printed the names of those present; a long list of civic dignitaries, the Heads of other schools, Mr. Theodosius representing the Board of Education, the School Doctor and Dentist, Governors and other visitors. Several speakers praised the work of the Lady Governors since 1875. Mr. Worsley, the Chairman, read a telegram from Miss Bowen, with her good wishes. He described the decision to move, 'The Governors have long been painfully aware that the School ought to be removed to fresher air and more extensive playgrounds.' The Bishop, who gave a prize each year to all the girls who obtained a distinction in Religious Knowledge in the Cambridge Local Examinations, complained that he was 'having to hand over as many as ten or eleven books at a time to the Red Maids.' Typical of Miss Webb's genius for pageantry and drama was a procession of the Bishop and the girls through the dormitories, when those still in the hall could hear the singing from above.¹¹

Founder's Day that year was spent quietly at the school. It was made notable by an address in which Miss Webb described the organization of the school and her aims in its administration. 'In a residential School like



(a)

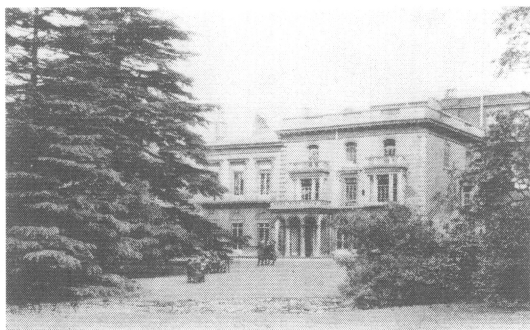


(b)

(a) a dormitory at Denmark Street, (b) a dormitory at Westbury

this there is no such thing as dealing with a particular department of a girl's education. We have the whole thing to tackle and we have to face the serious fact that such a school is indeed the great training ground for the formation of character.' The timetable was not much changed and the girls still learned to do a great deal of housework. For certain duties each girl was responsible; making her own bed, sweeping and dusting her cubicle in the dormitory, cleaning her own shoes and keeping herself and her belongings clean and neat. She described next the system of 'offices', by which certain domestic duties were performed by selected girls each term and a record was kept so that each girl became familiar with each part of the work; cleaning the classrooms, hall and dormitories, waiting at table, polishing the tables and floor, cleaning the silver and preparing the vegetables. This was in addition to a time-table which prescribed lessons from eight-fortyfive to twelve-fifteen and from three to four-fortyfive, with a daily walk from one-fifty to two-fifty and prep. from six-twenty to seven-thirtyfive. She also explained that 'the little girls have each a big girl or School Mother, whose responsibility and privilege it is to help to train her where she needs help. Whenever anything is wrong with any of the little girls it is the "Mother" who is first interviewed on the subject.'

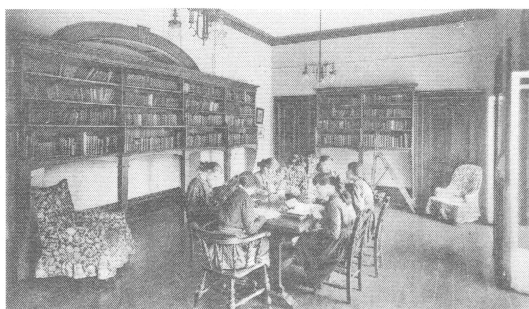
She believed in an all-round training. 'We do not aim at turning out girls at the ages of sixteen, seventeen or eighteen as experts in anything . . . an expert teacher, clerk, cook, nursery-maid, in fact, an expert anything at such an age would be a sorry product to present to the world. . . . Expertness can only come with matured experience. What we want to realize more fully and to get our girls to realize, is that every part of their training matters, and matters enormously.' What she aimed for was 'the capacity for a right and ready responsiveness to whatever training and experience the future will open out to them.' This was to be achieved by the 'principle of balance in the developing of body, mind and will.' No better statement could have described the aims of the school in the years to come. The Governors were, quite rightly, impressed and ordered Miss Webb's address to be printed. She had thought deeply about methods and aims in education. Her copy of W. H. Woodward's edition of *Desiderius Erasmus, Concerning the Aim and Method of Education*, published in 1904 and still in the school, is underlined and annotated on almost every page. She was conscientious and energetic, deeply religious and with imaginative and artistic gifts. For thirty years, she devoted herself to the school with a remarkable attention to detail and a willingness to try new ideas.¹²



(a)



(b)



(c)

Westbury, 1924. (a) the old house, (b) the entrance hall, (c) the library

The girls thought 'Burfield' beautiful and were impressed by its rural surroundings. The school fields had been temporarily let to a farmer, so sheep and cattle grazed there. Westbury was a small country village and a wicket gate opened to fields where the houses of Falcondale Road now stand. A rural path led across to Cote Lane and the Downs, a route which was a favourite for the regular afternoon walks. The grounds of the school were extensive, the drive lined with trees and there was a lily pond outside the study window. There were four dormitories instead of two and each girl had her own cubicle, with a curtain which could be drawn across for privacy. The four bathrooms on each floor were also welcomed, after those in Denmark Street, which were all in the basement.¹³

Sunday was always a special day for Mis Webb. It began with a short service before breakfast and another afterwards, with hymns and a talk. In these early days at Westbury, the girls walked to St. John's Church in Apsley Road in the morning and to St. Alban's, Westbury Park in the evening. After lunch, there was a special service, in which the girls recited the Collect and Epistle for the week (or a large part of it). The juniors should already have recited it to their 'Big Girls' and, during the service, anyone might be called on to stand up and repeat it alone in front of the whole school. The new girls always found this one of the most difficult tasks of their first year. Sunday was also the day for writing home and letters other than to parents required the permission of the Form Mistress. On Tuesday evenings, there were Missionary Parties when the girls knitted and sewed, while Miss Webb read aloud from books such as *Heidi*, *Daddy Long Legs* and *Scott's Last Expedition*.

The girls were allowed to bring back a maximum of ten shillings a term for pocket money, which was held by the Form Mistress and distributed at weekends, when some must be kept for Church. Sweets could also be brought back and some taken from the 'tuck-case' once a week. Holidays were very long but holiday tasks were always set; a book to read, an essay to write or a poem to learn. There were new black stockings to be 'run' at the heels to make them last, white lace-edged collars to make and tippets to hem. Health care was excellent, Miss Collier, the Matron and Miss Ure, the Nurse, and their successors made sure that everything was tidy, clean and polished and cod liver oil and Parish's Food were dispensed in winter at the slightest sign of a cold. The girls had to wear their hair long, the juniors with a narrow black velvet band to keep it out of their eyes, the seniors with plaits or tied with a big black ribbon bow stiffened with sugar-water.

Hair-washing took place in the downstairs cloakroom, often with much splashing and mirth, and shoes were polished in the boot-room, next door.

Old girls speak of Miss Webb as a gifted organiser and a 'formidable disciplinarian,' 'very strict and very kind.' 'Whenever our misdeeds were bad enough, off we were sent to Miss Webb. She would be angry, then explanatory, then understanding and forgiving and we would leave her room in repentant tears. She always wore a silver chatelaine round her waist, with lots of rattling pencils and keys on it and she always walked very quickly and so we could hear her coming. In later years we learned this was deliberate on her part.' She believed in the old maxim that most of the school should be under the eye of the Head Mistress. From a window in her study she could see the whole of the central hall. Anyone sent out of a classroom or running in the hall or making a noise or misbehaving in any way soon found herself explaining matters to the Head Mistress. The rules were strict, but they were well understood and always the same for everyone. Punishments were not harsh; sitting in silence in the hall with everyone passing; being sent to bed for the rest of the day to meditate on one's sins, or getting up early to relieve one of the vegetable girls of her task, were all fairly usual. The rule of silence in the dormitory was sometimes more honoured in the breach than in the observance and attempts to learn sign languages were soon abandoned, but at least it usually prevented any very loud noise.¹⁴

The academic work of the school flourished and all the fifth and sixth form girls were presented for the Cambridge Local Examinations. The School was inspected again in 1913 and, as a result, the new Chairman of Governors presented some new book-cases for the Library and Mr. Fenwick-Richards gave £10 for books. Miss Webb took a special interest in the admission procedure and herself interviewed the shortlisted candidates and heard them read. She sought always to raise the academic standard of the school and continued to appoint graduate staff wherever possible. In 1915, the West of England Branch of the Association of Assistant Mistresses held their Annual Conference at the School.¹⁵

The outbreak of war in 1914 at first had little effect on the school. There was eventually a partial black-out; the building was insured against aircraft damage, and the porter, who was a reservist, was called up for service. The girls knitted socks and helmets and gave their prize money to charity, receiving certificates instead. The price of food rose alarmingly and part of the playing-field was dug up for growing vegetables. Messrs. Jolly were unable to supply the usual red merino dress material, so all the girls

were supplied with blue serge drill costumes for everyday wear and their red clothes were to be reserved for Sundays and going out.¹⁶

In July 1916, overwhelmed by the appalling stream of casualties from the battle of the Somme, the Red Cross asked for the use of the building as a hospital and the Governors unanimously acceded to this request. Mr. Chattock, Mr. Fenwick Richards and Mr. Price were deputed to organise the move and Miss Webb agreed to make arrangements for the Cambridge Local Examinations to take place in some other building. On 4 August, the Red Cross took over the school building as a section of the Second Southern General Hospital and proposed to put in 200 beds. The Merchant Venturers' Society offered the school the Manor House at Clifton and the Governors took a short tenancy of 5, York Place for the Staff. The Red Cross agreed to meet all the costs of the move and to reinstate the Westbury premises at the end of the war.

The summer holidays were extended by a week and a printed circular was sent to all the parents, as the Board of Education required to be satisfied that the parents had been consulted and their agreement obtained. The Foundationers were to become day-girls and to attend school at the Manor House on five days a week. Mid-day dinner and tea would be provided and there would be a maintenance allowance of five shillings a week for orphans and four shillings for elementary school Foundationers, with one shilling a week for travelling if necessary. The Governors asked the parents for a reply and for their cooperation in encouraging regular attendance and 'evening studies,' so that each girl should continue 'to make the best of her opportunities where her education is concerned.'

The entrance examination was cancelled that year and the numbers kept to a maximum of sixty-eight. The girls felt that there was not really enough room, that much time was taken up in gardening and growing food as well as travelling to and from school and that work inevitably suffered. Drill was held at Clifton House School, netball at Mortimer House School and hockey on the Downs. Money usually set aside for prizes, books and games, outings and the Founder's Day Concert all went to war charities. The grapes that Mr. Chattock sent to the school each year and even their own efforts at cookery were taken to Westbury for the wounded soldiers. The first treat for many months came in November, 1918, when Miss Webb took some of the girls to a performance of *As You Like It* at the Prince's Theatre.¹⁷

By mid 1919, Doctor Carling reported that the general health of the pupils was causing some anxiety. There had been a severe outbreak of

the deadly post-war influenza among the domestic staff in March, one of the Red Maids had died, another was in a sanatorium and two girls had been removed from the school by their parents. There was a general decline in the physical fitness of the pupils, especially in the lower forms. Dr. Carling attributed it to a lack of nutritious food during the War. It is certain that this was general throughout the population and not unique to the Red Maids. The Book of Diets shows the decline in the quality of food during the War.

DIETARY TABLE FOR THE CHRISTMAS TERM 1907

September 15–21

Breakfast – eggs, porridge or bacon, bread and butter, tea or coffee.

Dinner

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
| Sunday | cold beef, lettuce | plum pie |
| Monday | roast leg mutton, greens, potatoes | rice pudding |
| Tuesday | potato pie, onions, potatoes | boiled rice, treacle |
| Wednesday | roast beef, vegetables, potatoes | bread and cheese |
| Thursday | Irish stew, onions, carrots, turnips, potatoes | sago pudding |
| Friday | fresh herrings, potatoes | rice and prunes |
| Saturday | roast beef, potatoes | batter pudding, sugar |

(sometimes on Saturdays they had bananas, apples or fruit pudding).

Tea – bread and butter with jam, treacle or marmalade, cake on Sundays

Supper – milk and bread.

This menu shows a considerable amount of starchy food but there is a meat dish every day except one and some fruit and vegetables. By 1916 the girls were having only the mid-day meal and a light tea at school. They brought their ration books every Monday morning as the rations had to be shared between school and home. The mid-day meal consisted of meat one day, fish another, cheese or potato pie on two days and lentil soup one day. By 1917, the amount of meat was further cut down and replaced by lentils and haricot beans. There were fewer girls and they were there for only five days instead of seven, but the allowance of meat was very considerably less per head than in 1921 and other essential foods, including butter, sugar and fruit, were scarce during the war. During the 1920s, the food became more varied again, with a cooked breakfast at least three days a week and fewer milk puddings.

DIETARY TABLE FOR 1935

Breakfast – eggs, cereal, porridge, bacon and fried bread, sausages, sardines, beans on toast, ham, fruit or rolls and marmalade.

Dinner

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sunday | cold meat, beetroot, potatoes | blancmange or pie |
| Monday | shepherd's pie, greens, potatoes | bread pudding |
| Tuesday | roast beef, vegetables, potatoes | rhubarb, custard |
| Wednesday | roast mutton, greens potatoes | sultana pudding, custard |
| Thursday | liver, bacon, carrots, potatoes | rice pudding |
| Friday | fish or macaroni cheese, potatoes | fruit pie, custard |
| Saturday | beef, carrots, potatoes | cheese and fruit |

Tea – bread and butter, jam or golden syrup, cake on Sundays (after 1938, cake or an apple in addition)

Supper – cocoa, milk or soup with bread and butter; milk and biscuits on Sundays.¹⁹

After the War, the girls were not able to return to Westbury until the beginning of 1920 because the house required extensive repairs and redecoration, which cost the Governors £1,000 more than they had received from the Red Cross. After the relaxation of manners during the war years, some of the girls found the return to boarding school discipline rather difficult. On the first evening, the strict silence rule in the dormitories was forgotten and all was joy and excitement. Most of the girls had not been boarders before, but many had read school stories and gossip and feasting in the dormitories added to the general delight. Most of the Staff seem to have adopted the 'Nelson touch,' no doubt reflecting that it was a very special occasion and that the morning would see the girls restored to their usual good sense. For one teacher, however, the noise outside her bedroom window proved too much and she reported the girls to Miss Webb. The breach of discipline could no longer be ignored. At Prayers the following morning, Miss Webb addressed the girls, 'Stand up those girls who did *not* speak in the dormitory last night.' No-one stood up. Each Prefect was asked in turn, and then the Head Girl, 'Edna, did *you* speak in the dormitory?' 'Yes, Miss Webb.' 'Then I am unable to teach you.' And the Head Mistress and the Staff walked from the room, followed by the line of domestic staff.

The girls, left alone in the Hall, were horrified. What should they do? After much discussion and with some of the younger ones in tears, it was decided to approach Miss Gaylard for advice and together they agreed that a public apology was needed. The Head Girl sought out Miss Webb, all the Staff returned to the Hall, even the domestic staff and the gardeners were called in, and, before them all, Edna Grice, the Head Girl, made the apology on behalf of the girls to their Head Mistress. Miss Webb, a strict disciplinarian, had also a fine sense of drama.²⁰

She used it to a very different effect on Saturday, 19 June, 1920, when an open day was held at the school, attended by Governors, Parents and Old Girls. 'The Red Maids shewed for the entertainment of their visitors...a Pageant which represented an episode in the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Bristol in 1574.' It represented an afternoon's entertainment in the house of Sir John Young and was acted in the grounds of the school, 'a fit setting for the picturesque Elizabethan costumes.' Since the girls rarely went out except to Church or on supervised walks, it was necessary to keep them well occupied and Miss Webb placed a high value on such activities. The girls played hockey, netball, tennis and cricket against other Bristol schools, and matches against the Old Girls and the Governors' Cricket Match were great occasions. However, such organised games interested Miss Webb much less than 'music and movement,' and the plays of Shakespeare and the Jacobean masques in which she delighted gave ample scope for both. Every year, Parents, Governors and Old Girls were invited to watch plays at the school. One year it was *Julius Caesar*, with sheets for togas; in July 1924, scenes from various Shakespeare plays, another year the singing of Elizabethan madrigals. In 1926, it was Ben Johnson's masque, *The Golden Age Restored*, which was presented in the first week of June. 'The weather was perfect, the first real summer evening of the year and the grounds, then at their very loveliest, formed a delightful setting for the children's dancing and acting.'²¹

Each month a 'Gaudeamus' was held at the school in the evening, to which the Old Girls were invited. Each 'gaudy' consisted of a concert of singing and piano playing or the acting of a short play, followed by games and supper. Miss Webb, as always in a modified version of the long Edwardian tea gown in silk or velvet, was the centre of the proceedings. Old girls were always welcome at the school and were invited to the end of term matches, to a special gathering after Founder's Day and to a Carol Concert after Church on the last Sunday of the Christmas Term.

'Houses' were introduced in 1922, based on the four dormitories and named after four of Whitson's ships; *Maryflowre*, *Seabrake*, *Discoverer* and *Speedwell*, with suitable house colours which were used in the curtains and counterpanes in the dormitory and in the dining-hall china. The House colours were also used in the ribbons attached to the various trophies competed for each year. They were mostly games trophies but there was also a 'Work Cup' for the House which had the best marks. Each House had two tables in the dining-hall, junior and senior, and the two House prefects took turns in sitting at the end of the tables and serving the food and trying to keep some kind of order. The prefects slept in wooden cubicles at the end of the dormitory but the beds of the other girls were outside their curtained cubicles which permitted a fair amount of quiet fun and games. Although the Juniors went to bed at eight-fifteen, few went to sleep before the Seniors came upstairs at nine and 'lights-out' at nine-thirty. 'Gymnastics' on the top of the cubicles, 'jousting' with window poles, dressing-up or the occasional 'flood,' when the baths overflowed, were some of the normal diversions. Every summer there was a garden-party in the grounds of the Priory, next door and the noise of the music and the crowds of people kept the girls awake, but no-one would have thought of sleep that night until the rich, deep voice of Dame Clara Butt was heard singing 'Land of Hope and Glory,' followed by the National Anthem.

The House was very much like a large family. Each member of the Staff belonged to a House and took a special interest in those girls. The 'Big Girl' was always a member of the same House and sometimes found herself dressing and undressing the little ones for the first few days of term. Evening prep. was supervised by the prefects in Houses, games competitions, House meetings, Sunday afternoon reading, tea parties, plays and other entertainments were all organized in Houses. The system seemed to prevent any serious bullying. Perhaps each girl felt too hardworked herself to wish to punish anything but serious wrongdoing.

Miss Webb was as demanding of herself in the running of the school as she was demanding of others. Her *General Book of Notes* details every aspect of school life and the responsibilities of every member of the community, even to the exact duties and precise timetable of the youngest kitchen maid. She knew where everyone should be at any given minute. A printed booklet was prepared for the teaching staff. Entitled *Points in regard to Duties, Discipline and Work*, it dealt with every facet of school life: the tidiness of the girls, their rooms, desks and work, their behaviour indoors and during

games and walks, 'Each Mistress to be responsible for the tone and behaviour and responsiveness of her Form, and to do all that it possible to get a good standard of honour and responsiveness of the right kind...' 'Each mistress to be ready to take her part in the social life of the School...' There were details concerning the work of the Mistress on Duty for the day, discipline in class, the syllabus, the Reference Library, examinations, exercise books, written work and marking, the neatness of classrooms and the insistence on 'healthy politeness in manner and attitude from every girl,' and so on through six pages of very small print.

'Our days seemed to be governed by bells,' wrote one Red Maid. 'Edwards, the School Porter, crunched up the long drive in his 1914-18 hobnailed boots to ring the 6.15 a.m. rising bell for the maids.' At half past six, a bell woke the girls with early morning 'offices' who must be down in the servery before seven where, in later years, tea and bread and butter were available before they began work. Just before seven, a second rising bell woke everyone else and it was wise to be out of bed and have the bed clothes turned back before Matron came round to see that everyone was awake and to turn on the baths, even if one then spent twenty minutes sitting on the hot-water pipe in the cubicle reading a library book before washing and dashing down the back stairs to breakfast at 7.40. At eight o'clock, the girls went upstairs to make their beds and sweep and dust their cubicles while Matron and Housemistress saw that the dormitory girls and bath girls finished the cleaning. Book girls for each class put exercise books for marking in a cupboard outside the Staff room and collected any that had been marked. They must also see the Mistresses to find out what books or materials would be required for the day's lessons. Before prayers there was a period of ten to fifteen minutes when the girls were outside in House groups, practising team games or playing with balls and hoops. After that, they went to their form rooms for registration and then to Prayers, followed by the morning's lessons. In the early years, lunch was followed by a walk across the Downs or to Westbury Village and then two afternoon lessons, but once day-girls were admitted, lessons came first so that the day-girls could leave for home. The boarders washed and changed from gymslips to dresses for the evening and spent ten minutes standing at the end of their beds brushing their long hair. Tea, usually of bread and butter and jam, was followed by prep. which was done in houses and supervised by the house prefects. The silence rule was then very strictly enforced and no novels were allowed, though it was not unknown for a girl to give herself away by weeping over books such as D. K. Broster's *The Wounded Name*. This meant

being sent out to do one's prep. in the Hall under the eye of the Mistress on duty for the next week. In Miss Webb's time, prep. was from six to seven-thirty, after which it was supper, Prayers and bed for the Juniors and more prep. for the Seniors until they went to bed at nine.

Wednesday afternoon was set aside for games, gardening or a walk and there were lessons on Saturday morning and prep. on Saturday evening, so that Saturday afternoon was virtually the only free time the girls had in the week. Sunday was taken up with services at school and Church morning and evening.

In 1920, the governing Body was reconstituted to consist of twelve members appointed by the Trustees of the Bristol Municipal Charities, eight appointed by the Local Education Committee and four co-opted Lady members. Application was then made to the Board of Education for recognition as a grant-aided secondary school. The cost of clothes had risen so much that, from 1913, the parents had been asked to provide underwear according to a clothing list. Hats were to be worn instead of bonnets except on special occasions, tippets and aprons were no longer to be worn in school, and in 1921 a clothing fee was instituted of £9 a year for ex-elementary school pupils and £6 a year for orphans. The clothing list included woollen combinations, black knickers with white linings, red and white striped 'Tobralco' petticoats, white pinafores with broderie anglaise bodices, white nightdresses and warm dressing gowns. The girls added woollen bed-socks and jackets in the winter terms. Indoor and outdoor shoes had also to be provided, with slippers, gym shoes, hockey boots and gardening boots. Blazers were optional but were so useful that most parents bought them buying them in the first year much too large and taking up the hems until the girls grew. During the day the girls wore pleated red gym-slips with cream square-necked blouses and in the evening, red dresses with white lace-edged collars. In later years, red cardigans were provided and red cotton dresses and white ankle socks were introduced for summer wear. Black shoes and stockings continued to be worn in the winter.²³

In June 1923, the school was visited by His Majesty's Inspectors who had nothing but praise for Miss Webb. 'Her tactful and conscientious work would be difficult to better and her personality was of the greatest value and was largely responsible for the very healthy and happy atmosphere of the School.' She had introduced a system of 'Courts' which was aimed to control the general life of the school. Each form constituted a Court with elected President, Vice-President and Secretary. However, as with most

institutions of the kind in schools, the girls felt that it never really worked because the Head Mistress and Form Mistress were always present and the girls were inhibited from expressing their real opinions. The Inspectors thought the system was working well in 1923 but it had been discontinued by the time they next visited the school. The House system was also praised and the teaching of Religious Knowledge, Art, Housecraft, Needlework and Gardening, but for several subjects it had proved difficult to find well qualified and suitable teachers. Miss Webb had introduced in 1922, an experiment on modified Dalton lines, reducing the hours of class teaching and with much of the work carried out by assignments, intended to arouse a spirit of investigation and, above all, to teach the girls to work independently and to learn the use of books. As so often, the scheme was being defeated partly by the inability of some of the pupils to benefit from such a course, partly by the inexperience of the Staff and their tendency to give the pupils too much direction. The probability is also that a great many more books were needed and even outside visits to create interest.

Of the ninety-two girls leaving between 1913 and 1922, six had obtained University Degrees and gone into secondary teaching; thirty-five went to College and then into elementary schools and two went to College to train as gardeners. Four girls became nurses, three became librarians, fifteen left without finishing the course and six because they were unable to profit from the education provided. The rest went into commerce, mainly as typists or clerks. Thus, almost half of the girls went on to further education.

The Inspectors suggested that the orphans might be drawn from a wider area, so promoting more competition and better academic standards. However, this was not the purpose of the Foundation. The other suggestion was the admission of paying day-girls. The same Staff could teach fifty more pupils and class numbers ranged from ten to sixteen instead of the normal secondary class of thirty-five. Such very small classes were inefficient and not stimulating. Mr. Leighton thought that extra desks alone might cost £1,000 which was impossible at that time. However, the Governors set up a committee to study the problem and, in 1924, applied to the Board of Education for leave to prepare a new Scheme which would authorize the governors to admit fee-paying day-girls. The Scheme was approved in 1925 and day-girls admitted from the autumn term, but the next Inspection in December, 1929, found only seventeen day-girls in the school.

In 1929, the Inspectors were particularly impressed by 'the spotless appearance' of the school, with all its shining white paintwork at a time when

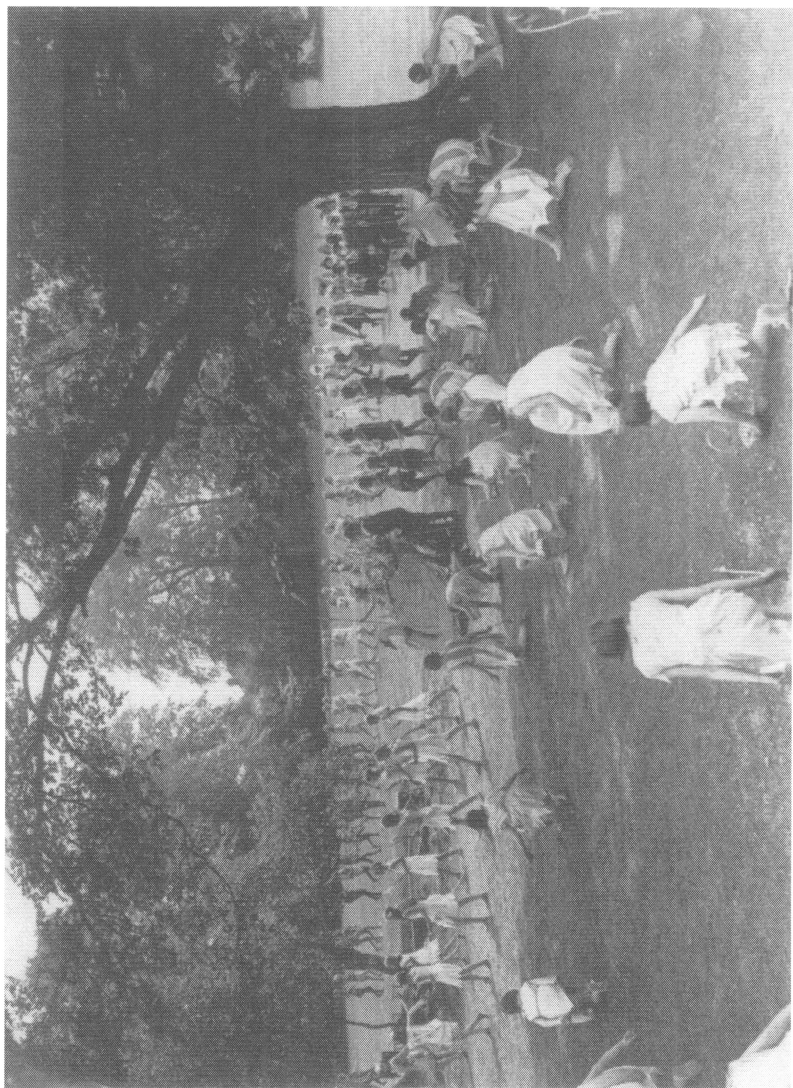
most state schools were walled with drab green or brown tiles. They criticised the lack of a gym and the absence of a playroom for the girls. They found the Library inadequate and the eight or nine-period school day much too long, especially when there was so much prep. in the evening. Such a day, 'fully and usefully apportioned' left no time for School Societies or for 'the exercise of individual as apart from collective tastes.' They considered the proportion of orphans among the eighty boarders and found it 'questionable whether suitability should be interpreted quite so much in the light of academic attainment as it was' and put forward the idea that 'the social circumstances of the orphan candidates' might be 'a stronger factor in determining entry.' In spite of this, the supposed failure of orphans to benefit from the education offered in the school, or the difficulties some members of the Staff found in teaching classes with a slightly wider spread of ability than they might have wished, became a regular complaint in later years.

The Inspectors noted that the funds of the charity were in a healthy condition and pressed again for an extra building and more day-girls, since a two-stream entry would permit grading according to ability and would require no more domestic staff and only a few more teachers. There were several useful suggestions for changes to attract day-girls.²⁵ By 1932, the governors were discussing whether to plan for a school of about 160 girls or a full two-stream entry of 300. They decided that financial considerations permitted only the former, but that the new buildings should be 'so planned that their extension in the future, should it ever be possible, could be effected easily and conveniently.'²⁶ Plans were drawn up for a detached building in the paddock near the footpath leading to Westbury Road. This would provide a convenient access for day-girls, it was screened by trees from the main building, and it was near to the main drain. It would provide three classrooms, a new science room, an art room, a gymnasium with lavatories and cloakrooms and a large Sixth Form room or Common Room for the Staff and it would admit of future extensions. The estimated cost was £12,271, including some necessary alterations to the old building, much more than the Inspectors had supposed. Even then, the Board of Education wanted a larger gym, science and art rooms so that the final tender was £13,333, though the plans were extravagant in the space given to corridors and stairwell. Work began in 1933 and, at the same time, the playing fields were improved and a hard tennis court was laid in the old farm yard. Many more day-girls were admitted and temporary classrooms were made in the old laundry. At the same time, the cookery room was improved and extended.²⁷

Early in the autumn of 1933, Miss Webb became seriously ill and left on sick leave for the rest of term. Miss Gaylard was put in charge and a temporary Mistress engaged. Then scarlet fever broke out in the school and a trained nurse was engaged to help the Matron. Seven boarders went to Ham Green Hospital, thirteen to Novers Hill and six went home. All day-girls not already immunised were excluded from school and the Founder's Day celebrations were cancelled. Later in the term, everyone went away for an extra week's holiday while the school was disinfected. Miss Gaylard, with her long experience of the school and her great good sense, was able to cope admirably with this crisis, with the help of Matron and the new school Doctor, Dr. Cookson.²⁸

In February 1934, Miss Webb sent in her letter of resignation. It was accepted with the greatest regret. She had held the appointment since 1906 and the governors made it plain that, if her doctor would permit, they would like her to stay until Christmas to take charge of the Tercentenary celebrations. Miss Webb's first contribution in the summer of 1934, was a production of Ben Johnson's *Masque of Oberon, the Faery Prince*, originally presented for Prince Henry at the Palace of Whitehall in 1611. Every Red Maid and every member of Staff took part and performances were given in the school grounds on four days in mid-June. The masque included many folk dances and court dances and a number of very difficult and beautiful madrigals. A guest described, 'a glorious afternoon amidst magical surroundings, watching fauns and satyrs peeping from behind trees, dancing joyously and vanishing again; stately courtiers, knights and ladies dancing pavans...singing difficult madrigals, such as *The Nightingale* and *When lo! by break of morning*.' At the end of term, the whole school went by train to Stratford on Avon to see a play at the Theatre there.²⁹

In the Autumn the Tercentenary was celebrated on 15 October with a service at St. Nicholas' Church, where the Bishop of Bristol preached the sermon. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, was the guest of honour at the luncheon, which was followed in the afternoon by the opening and dedication of the new building. The pupils and 850 guests went in procession from a marquee on the field to the building which was opened by Lord Sankey and dedicated by the Bishop at a service in the hall there, the President of the Free Church Federation also taking part in the ceremony. Tea followed in the old building and on the following day the Old Girls' Society held a commemoration dinner. They had presented the school with the fine gates at the entrance to the new drive.



The Masque of Oberon, 1934

It was an interesting and demanding term. A Royal Wedding brought an extra day's holiday at halfterm. Founder's Day in November was spent quietly at Westbury with prize-giving at an informal ceremony in the afternoon. At the end of term, Miss Webb retired and, in addition to the usual carol concerts, the Staff produced a play in her honour. It was Dorothy Sayers' *The Boy with a Cart*, with one of the new first year girls as the boy. For almost thirty years Miss Webb had ruled over and cared for the school. With her endless attention to detail, her devotion, her energy and her imagination, she was a remarkable Head Mistress.³⁰

The following term the school welcomed its new Head with an epidemic of diphtheria but it was not very serious. There was one case among the day-girls, the boarders were all inoculated and two girls, found to be carriers were removed to Ham Green. The Governors had appointed as Head Miss Kathleen Walpole, M.A., previously Senior History Mistress at the Royal School at Bath. Miss Walpole made few changes in the first year, except for encouraging the use of the new games facilities. Miss Price, the games mistress, who had been part-time, became full-time and the girls were able to enjoy lessons in the new gym, as well as country-dancing and, for the boarders, team games every afternoon. In the summer term swimming was introduced, to the delight of the girls who went every Saturday morning to the Wanderers' Club at Clifton. Miss Price later introduced remedial exercises for girls who needed them. Eventually, she also devised an elaborate system of 'tests' in each game, which secured House points, as did the lunch-time section drill which had its annual competition. Such extremes of competition would be out of favour now, but it must be said that it was not the old-fashioned 'bend stretch' of the drill or the distance one could throw a cricket ball which was important, but that it did get all the girls out in the fresh air. Even more important was the opportunity the system gave to all the senior girls in each House to use and develop the capacity for leadership, the exercise of imagination and organizing ability and the responsibility of the older girls for the younger ones in the House.

At the end of the summer term, Miss Gaylard left. She had been a pupil at the school from 1885 to 1894 and a Mistress since 1899. Generations of Red Maids remember her as a wise mentor and a friend, always demanding the highest standards and unswervingly loyal to the school. The Governors recorded their tribute, 'They feel that her character and devotion have been of the utmost value in the life of the School and to many generations of pupils.' In 1934-35 the school also won high academic honours.



The New or '300' Building, 1934

Irene Townsend won a State Scholarship and the Elizabeth Lowman prize, awarded by the University of Cambridge to the girl who heads the list in English and, in 1935, she secured a place at St. Hugh's College, Oxford. The other distinction that year was won by Yvonne Fisher, who gained one of the two scholarships for the piano offered by the Royal College of Music to men and women in the British Isles. Throughout the 1930s the general academic standard of the school continued good, with increasing numbers of distinctions in the Cambridge School Certificate examinations.³¹

At the beginning of the new school year, in September 1935, Miss Walpole made several useful changes in the school routine. Wednesday afternoons became normal lesson times and Saturday morning was freed from lessons, which was particularly helpful for the day-girls and probably for the Staff. Prep. was set for the weekend which the boarders did on Friday evening and Saturday morning. The later part of Saturday morning was set aside for mending, but the rest of the day was then free. The amount of prep. on other evenings was cut so that the juniors worked from five-thirty to six-fortyfive, when they crept out of the House rooms to take their free time in the new building. The seniors worked on until seven-thirty and had their free time after evening Prayers, from eight-fifteen until nine o'clock. This allowed everyone an evening a week to attend Mrs. Smith's craft classes and an evening for Guides for those who wished to join. Rehearsals for house-plays, form-plays, play readings and concerts always took up a great deal of time, but it became possible to read library books and to follow one's chosen hobbies. There grew up a number of clubs, a Nature Club, a French Circle and a Music Society. Miss Walpole was herself a keen gardener and the girls had for many years learned gardening on one of the games afternoons. A number of small gardens were marked out at the far side of the top field and several girls were able to enjoy cultivating their own gardens there and Miss Walpole presented a prize each year for the best garden. Day-girls were included much more in the life of the school, playing a full part in House and form activities and producing their own play in 1936. On the other hand, Miss Walpole believed that the school must give the boarders many of the opportunities and experiences which their parents would provide if they were at home. On the usual school half-holidays, such as Dedication Day, Shrove Tuesday and Ascension Day there were picnics, treasure hunts and various outside visits in Form or House groups. Shrove Tuesday also meant pancakes and a fancy dress dance and Halloween a party, usually organized by one of the Houses. Girls sometimes went to the University for lectures

and to concerts at the Colston Hall. There were also occasional visits to the Prince's Theatre, the most memorable being Robert Speight's *Murder in the Cathedral*, Gielgud's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and Pamela Brown in *Victoria Regina*.

The parents of boarders were allowed to visit on two Saturday evenings each term and on the Open Day at the end of the Summer term when the girls mounted a display of their work or some kind of entertainment. By 1938, the Sixth Form were allowed to go out to borrow books from Westbury Library, to go to the village on Saturday mornings for shopping and for walks on Saturday afternoons.³²

During the years leading to the Second World War, the Staff tried hard to keep the boarders in touch with international events. Books about recent history, about events in Russia, China and Germany and about the Spanish Civil War were freely lent by the Staff to any girl who was interested. The seniors were able to listen to the radio in the evenings if they wished and one girl, alone in the nursery at the time of the abdication of Edward VIII, remembers creeping out on to the deserted landing and sitting on the stairs to hear the abdication speech. A group of girls went to a party for Austrian refugees after Hitler's invasion of their country, to hand round food and to entertain the guests with country dancing. Everyone gathered to hear Mr. Churchill's speeches in 1940 and copies of newspapers and *The Illustrated London News* were available in the Library.

A weekly lesson in Civics appeared on the time-table of each form except the youngest and an annual General Knowledge Competition was instituted with its own prize to be presented on Founder's Day. Miss Kathleen Gibberd came to the school to talk about the League of Nations and set an essay competition on *The Good Citizen in a Democratic State*. Some girls were also successful in outside essay and painting competitions during these years. Staff returned from London and Stratford with enthusiastic descriptions of productions of *Richard of Bordeaux*, *Johnson over Jordan* and *King Lear*. They then obtained copies of these and other plays for Saturday evening play-readings, which usually took place in the Library in the New Building and in which Staff and senior girls took part. *Arms and the Man*, *Tobias and the Angel*, *Berkeley Square* and Priestley's 'Time' plays were among the favourites.

Drama always flourished in the school. There were House plays and form plays, Shakespeare or home-made pantomime. Even an ordinary English or Latin lesson might leave the classroom floor strewn with bodies. In 1938-9, Maryflowre produced *The Invisible Duke* without any help from the Staff

and Discoverer mounted the full three-act play of *Pride and Prejudice*, with a large cast including Staff and day-girls. The same year the Head Mistress and the Staff delighted everyone with Clifford Bax's play *The Immortal Lady*. The other arts were not forgotten. Through the School prints scheme, the girls found ten new colour prints on the walls each term and there is no doubt that some of them caused a great deal of heated discussion.

An unusually large Sixth Form in 1939–40 enabled Miss Walpole to introduce a general course for girls who did not wish to take Higher School Certificate. In addition to the Higher Certificate subjects of English, History, French and Latin, girls could choose to study English Literature, Geography, Civics, World History and Current Events, Domestic science and Needlework and there were also classes in hygiene, first aid and child care.³³

In order to ease the problem of a wide spread of ability and a grossly overworked Staff, specialist teachers of French and Latin were appointed, so that as far as possible, each teacher could specialize in the subject in which she was best qualified. The experiment of a 'Tutorial afternoon' on Dalton Plan lines was also tried. The Staff were in their classrooms to help those who must repeat work badly done or who needed practice in the prescribed style of handwriting. Girls not receiving such tuition were encouraged to attempt a project with wider reading and some independent work. For this, the supply of books was quite inadequate and, in any case, the younger girls were not allowed to work in the Library.

The health of the girls was very well cared for by the Matron, Miss Whitsit, who combined the duties of Matron and Housekeeper. She was a very practical person, kindly and attentive if one was sick, but efficient and with excellent discipline. She was responsible for the clean and pleasant appearance of the school and she always kept small vases of flowers on each table in the dining hall. There was an epidemic of influenza in 1937 but it was not very serious, the main casualty being the performance of two short plays at St. Alban's Hall. *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *The Man with the Dumb Wife* were in the end a great success, in spite of the epidemic in which the understudies of understudies succumbed.

In 1937, the social service work of the school was reorganized, each form taking a local charity and contributing, not only money, but time, work and thought, by which means some very strange knitted and stuffed animals found their way to the local children's home. Other girls helped run holiday camps for needy children and old clothes were washed and mended for poor children in one of the city's junior schools.³⁴

His Majesty's Inspectors visited the school again in December, 1937. They formed a high opinion of Miss Walpole both in her teaching of history and her management of the school, 'she was excellent in every department.' They were glad to see that the number of day-girls at last exceeded the number of boarders and that they were more integrated into the life of the school. 'At the time of their last inspection they also felt that there was some feeling of repression among the girls, but this had now largely disappeared, and the girls were enjoying much more freedom and acquiring habits of independence.' They praised the buildings but wished there were a more liberal allowance for books, recommending the Governors to read the Carnegie Report. The Domestic Science Inspector had gone into food values and wondered if the girls were getting enough protein, 'there was too much bread and butter.' They approved the system of 'offices' but 'wondered if it was necessary for the girls to peel potatoes for about a hundred people each day.' The Lady Governors, when appealed to, had little to say in favour, 'It was an unpleasant job which anyone could learn in five minutes.'

The financial position was sound. There was a debt of £3,000 from the cost of building, but most years income exceeded expenditure by about £1,200. The Inspectors thought perhaps the Governors attached too much importance to the debt. Mr. Chattock thought not, they 'tried to run the school on business lines.' The Inspectors then put forward various suggestions which they were to return to on each subsequent visit with increasing vehemence until change was compelled; a situation in some ways parallel with that between 1875 and 1908. The main suggestions were first, that it was not the best use of the funds of the Foundation to provide clothes, food and lodging for girls whose parents could well afford to pay for them. They then pointed out that a two-stream entry would be economically and academically more desirable. The increase in fees would soon pay the cost of an extension to the New Building and the possibility of 'grading' would meet the complaints of the Staff about the wide range of ability, especially as it was desirable that need as well as academic ability should determine the entry of orphans into the school. Finally, the requirement that all the Mistresses should live in the school meant that the selection was very limited. Many applicants preferred not to board. What was equally important, but not mentioned by the Inspectors was that the girls should have had a wider choice of examination subjects, which a two-stream entry would have made possible.

All the minor recommendations of the Inspectors were implemented immediately. The girls were to have another item, an apple or a cake, for

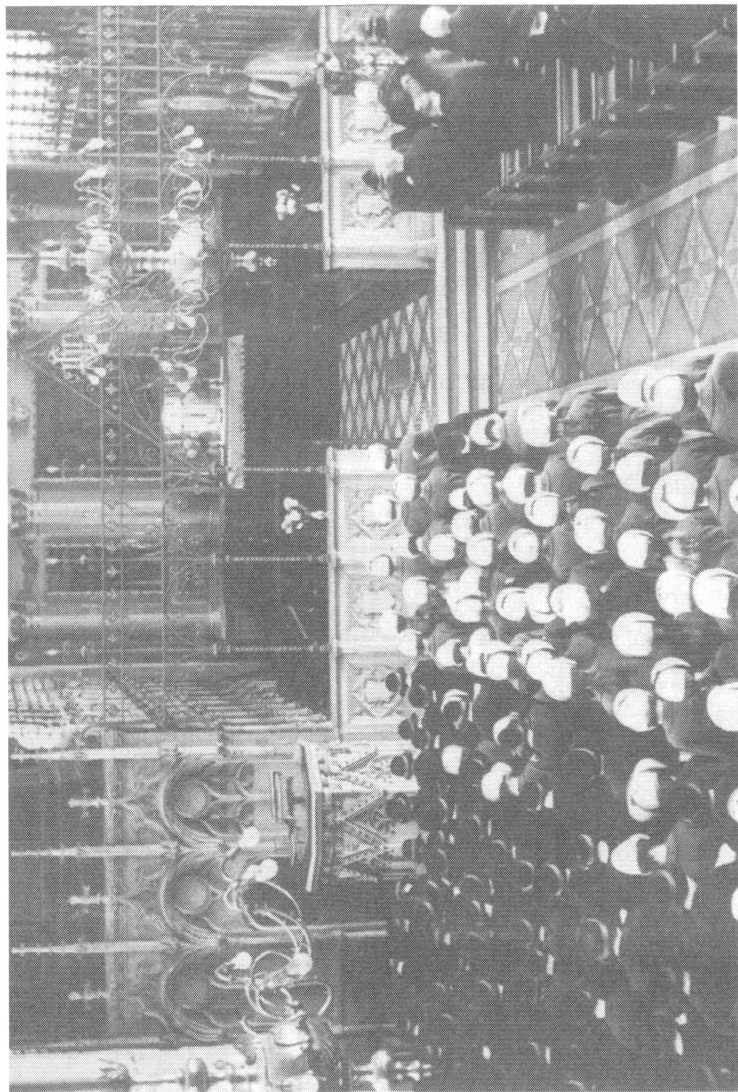
tea in addition to the usual bread and butter and jam. The Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Governing Body, known as the School Committee rejected the other proposals right away. They would need not only four classrooms and another laboratory but a new Assembly Hall and more playing fields, which meant 'an inevitable debt of £20,000.' There was no precise costing of the plan, no consideration of the possibility of fee-paying boarders and no investigation of the possible number of new day-girls and the amount that would produce in fees. The attitude of the Governors towards finance; the exclusion of the ladies, even the Head Mistress, whenever money was discussed; the evident satisfaction each year at even the smallest credit balance is so reminiscent of Mr. Micawber and at a time when even the workman on the Bedminster tram (surely the Bristol equivalent of the Clapham omnibus) was borrowing to buy himself a home. Perhaps the last chance of pre-war expansion disappeared when, in 1938, the Priory Estate was sold to a local builder for £18,600. The Governors, not being prepared to buy the whole and sell off what they did not need, then found that they were unable to buy land for a playing field or even the belt of trees along the new drive. It is easy, of course, with hindsight, to criticise the Governors. They were concerned to preserve the funds of the Trust. Most girls' boarding schools were small and there was no guarantee of enough fee-paying pupils to fill the additional places. In the event, it might well have been prevented at the planning stage, like Hull Grammar School, by the outbreak of war.³⁵

The small school had one advantage for the girls, most important in a boarding school. It was usually possible to find a quiet corner. The New Building was often a quiet place, especially at weekends and some kind soul had presented the Library there with a set of bound volumes of *Punch* from about 1890 to the 1920s which were a great delight. There were the gardens, the belts of trees; limes, walnut, chestnut and the much loved weeping ash. There was the 'piggery' where the garden tools were stored and even the high parapet over the sewing room in the Stable Block. There were always flowers, from the prunus and cornus of January to the lilac, medlar and laburnum of spring and the honeysuckle and roses of June. Blue and white violets flowered around the Staff tennis court and primroses and cowslips under the Judas Tree and in the ha-ha where the air-raid shelter was later built. There were long, warm afternoons in the kitchen garden picking red currants and in the winter in the potting shed preparing seed trays. At the heart of all the many activities, games and work, plays and 'offices,' the cold

and the chilblains, was the reassurance of a quiet, peaceful, stable routine which continued even in war time. One of the pupils at that time wrote, 'When I came back in the middle of the spring term, 1941, after the upsets of bombing, what struck me was the quiet and calm of the place.'

There were many occasions, of course, when the quiet was shattered. The girls of the 1930s had been brought up on the school stories of Angela Brazil, but Red Maids usually had neither the money nor the inclination to wander around the school at night holding mid-night feasts. However, there was some sort of tradition of a feast for the leavers at the end of the summer term. The 1939 feast was possibly the last of its kind. On the afternoon of the Governors' cricket match, those girls in the Fifth and Sixth Forms who were not in the team disappeared to one of the dormitories where cases of food brought in by the Sixth form and the day-girls were opened and sorted. Sandwich fillings were mixed in bedroom utensils, never otherwise used, and included several tins of best salmon. Sandwiches, biscuits and chocolate bars, fruit, lemonade, tea, milk and a kettle were all carefully repacked. No-one even thought of anything stronger! When the time came, soon after mid-night, the senior girls all gathered in one of the lower dormitories, ran in single file down the fire escape, across the field and into the New Building. There, all the lights were switched on, tea was brewed and the food eaten with a great deal of noise and laughter. Early in the morning, when it began to get light, the proceedings ended with dancing – particularly the fashionable 'Lambeth Walk.' Rumour had it that the sounds of merriment were heard not only in the Old Building, but in many of the new houses on the Priory Estate. When a similar leaving feast was held in 1862 at Wesley's school, the Master, roused by one of the maids, turned the fire hose on the miscreants. The Staff at Red Maids' wisely turned over and went to sleep, since the majority of the participants were leaving within the week. The outbreak of war, two months later, prevented a repetition of elaborate feasts of that kind.

By May, 1938, the School Committee was already considering Air Raid Precautions, some of the Staff were receiving instruction and, after the Munich Crisis in the autumn, work was begun on strengthening the cellars. By May, 1939, the Board of Education was urging the immediate provision of Air Raid Shelters and plans were prepared for shelters in the grounds near the New Building. At the same time, orders were placed for blackout material, fire-fighting equipment, tape for the windows and for a considerable quantity of crockery, cutlery, linen, curtains and other



Founder's Day Service at St. Nicholas' Church in the 1930s

household goods in case of a price rise if war came. Everyone was fitted with a gas mask and it was decided that, if necessary, the girls would be sent home for a short time until all preparations were completed and circulars were prepared to send to parents. No-one seems to have considered the possibility of evacuation to a more rural site but that would probably have been both complicated and expensive.

When war was declared in September, 1939, the circulars were sent at once for the seniors to return on the date arranged, the middle school three weeks later and the juniors three weeks after that. By that time, the reinforced shelters on the field were completed. It proved impossible to black-out the New Building so it could never be used after dark but the work of the school continued normally as far as possible. The girls knitted over 100 pairs of sea-boot stockings that year, twenty pairs of Air Force socks and forty Balaclava helmets. A corner of the field was dug and trenched for growing vegetables and Founder's Day shillings were given to buy materials for war work. The radio brought news of naval battles as the girls prepared to celebrate Christmas, and Discoverer House rejoiced around their small Christmas Tree that they had begun the tradition of decorating the dormitory in 1938 and so had some decorations in store.

Summer 1940 brought, as well as the usual examinations, the bad news from France and the evacuation from Dunkirk. Miss Walpole writes, 'Looking back, it is difficult to believe that during such a time we went ahead with the preparation of a school play at St. Alban's Hall on June 5th.' The play was *The Chinese Lantern* by Laurence Houseman with special music written by Yvonne Fisher. Miss Walpole had taken the precaution of giving a leading role to the girl who had started the 'flu epidemic on the previous occasion when a play was to be performed at St. Alban's. She could not insure against the advance of the German troops to the Channel coast. The play went ahead but it did not seem right to send out a large number of invitations.³⁷

Everyone gathered round the radio to hear the news and Churchill's speeches, wondered at the photographs and drawings of Dunkirk in *The Illustrated London News* in the Library and hurried down to the cellar in silent single file when the Air Raid Warning sounded at night. There, the Staff tried to look as if it were a normal everyday occurrence; many of the children fell asleep and some seniors who were taking exams continued to study. The examination results remained good and, for the first time, every girl entered for the School Certificate Examination passed. Every summer

holiday during the war the Staff came back to school for a fortnight at a time to run a holiday school for the girls in which over three-quarters took part. The first year, Miss Humphreys produced the Toy Symphony, Miss Stoker did modelling, there were games, crafts, music, gardening, jam-making, dress-making, the Library was open for those who wished to read or study and Miss Price and other members of Staff organized a camp at Shipham in the Mendips.

When the girls returned in the autumn of 1940, arrangements had been made for them to sleep in the shelters. In each of the outside shelters, the day-time benches were drawn together at night to support the mattresses and bedding of fourteen senior girls and two mistresses. The younger girls with two mistresses slept in the shelters under the main building, some on the floor, some on benches, some in hammocks. They were certainly crowded, but most slept undisturbed and their health remained good. The remaining Staff slept on the ground floor of the House, taking turns as A.R.P. Wardens and Firewatchers. The most difficult tasks were moving the bedding each day to make room for day-girls, should there be a day-light raid, and shepherding the girls upstairs in groups to have supper and undress in the dark dormitories when raids began in the early evening.

In order to keep the school timetable running smoothly, the number of teaching periods in the day was reduced from seven to six and prep. was set each morning for the seventh. Before morning prayers, each girl took to the shelter her gas mask and a red-striped canvas bag containing all she needed for the period of preparation. If there was an 'Alert,' they went straight to the shelters and worked at their prep. When the 'All clear' sounded, they returned to the rooms where they had been working until a message was received from the Head Mistress with the arrangements for the rest of the day, so that each subject had some time allotted to it. The prep. having been done, the seventh period was available for teaching and became known as the 'floating period.' When there was no day-time raid, the day-girls could leave before dusk and evening prep. ended earlier, which was convenient in winter when darkness brought air raids in the early evening.³⁸

The only bomb which caused damage at the school fell during one of the daylight raids on Filton in September, 1940, when many windows were broken and the door of one of the outside shelters was damaged. Serious attacks on the City began on Sunday, 24 November, 1940, and continued until Easter, 1941, and one evening hundreds of incendiary bombs fell across the school playing fields but none touched the buildings. It was a time

of great strain and anxiety for girls and Staff. Some of the girls lost homes and property in the City and one of the day-girls was killed. The school itself was for some days without electricity and water after the worst raids. Miss Walpole writes of Christmas 1940, 'On the last evening of term, there were the usual House teas, followed by dancing and acting, but the traditional procession through the dormitories of Staff and senior girls singing carols by candle-light had, of course, to be abandoned. There was, however, a surprise in store. After 'lights out' in the shelters, suddenly through the ventilator openings there came softly but clearly the sound of lullaby carols. The singers outside, members of Staff and prefects, could not but be uplifted by the heavenly beauty of the night, bright with stars and awesome in its peace.'

In January, 1941, the Governors decided that any parents who wished their daughters to live at home might do so. The girls would be 'day-boarders,' would wear their usual uniform, have a mid-day meal in school and an allowance for maintenance and travelling which was paid monthly. Miss Price took charge of the extra administration and all payments and other details were recorded in a special book. About thirty boarders took advantage of this, which relieved the crowding in the shelters at night, especially the outside ones, which became flooded in the winter. Miss Walpole and the Staff carried a heavy responsibility during these months especially until, during the severe raids of March and April, 1941, members of the local Home Guard took up duty at the school, to help should bombs or incendiaries fall.

It was a matter of pride for everyone to get to work as soon as possible on the morning after a raid and the Red Maids were no exception. In her account of the war years, Miss Walpole pays tribute to the girls, the Staff and the Domestic Staff for their constancy, cheerfulness and hard work. The girls, without exception, have given much credit to Miss Walpole and the Staff for the calm way in which so much work was done, a new routine established and the work of the school carried on in an interesting and orderly manner. 'Food rationing was introduced in January, 1940,' writes one, 'but we continued to be fed adequately. No doubt someone was doing marvels with the rations.' Another admitted being 'much more afraid of the opinion of Miss Humphreys on the pathetic state of my maths, than of anything Hitler could do.' Examination results were good, girls continued to win University places and dramatic and musical activities were fostered by Miss Melhuish and Miss Balmond. The Governors were also cheered when they found themselves able to pay off the last of the debt of £3,000 which



Red Maids emerging from one of the air-raid shelters, 1940

had troubled them since 1934, in spite of the cost of building the shelters and the destruction of some Trust property by bombing. In general, their finances remained in credit each year, though, of course, little maintenance work could be done at the school or to the country properties.

By 1942, the school had reverted to its normal time-table and all the boarders were back in residence. Demand for places was high and, with an extra entry of day-girls, the total reached 200, with a resulting strain on Staff and accommodation, especially as, during the year, the one remaining male gardener, the Porter, the House Mistress, the Dressmaker, and four resident maids all left. From this time, for many years, the school wrestled with severe staffing problems. However, a series of tests on the girls' health, taken as part of a national survey, showed, 'an extremely fine level of nutrition... It speaks volumes for the diet and conditions prevailing at Red Maids' that these figures should be so very good.'³⁹

The preparation and passage through Parliament of the 1944 Education Act brought new ideas to the fore. Fear that the Direct Grant system would be discontinued caused the Bristol schools to form *The Bristol Direct Grant Secondary Schools' Committee*. It did not happen at that time, but the changes implied by the Act caused Miss Walpole to ponder again the needs of the orphans, whose examination failure rate was higher than that of the ex-elementary girls and who usually could not afford to stay into the Sixth Form. If Secondary Education was to be for all and, if the Red Maids' School was to be a grammar school, would it be for the benefit of orphans to admit them if they were unsuited to that type of education, when suitable secondary schools were available? On the other hand, was it not Whitson's first thought to provide for orphans? This was to place far too much stress on purely academic criteria, when even the Inspectors had long ago suggested that more stress should be placed on need rather than academic excellence in the admission of orphan candidates. Perhaps, since then, we have learned the answers to some of these questions. Mixed-ability teaching is not uncommon and the careers of Red Maids, orphans or others, are only beginning when they leave school.

In 1944, the Staff found 'a lack of concentration and a general fecklessness in the junior and middle school', for which the Staff felt that lack of training in the critical years of the war was responsible. This was met in part by introducing a different syllabus in the lower stream of the two-stream entry form and the extended use of the 'project' method of teaching. A week in the Spring term was set aside for a 'Bristol Week,'



Queen Mary and the Princess Royal with Miss Walpole at the School, 1945

a study of all aspects of the City by the whole school and in the following year there was a 'French Week.'

The European Victory, in May, 1945, was celebrated with two days' holiday and the following Sunday, the Red Maids attended morning service at St. Alban's in full traditional costume of tippets and aprons, bonnets and lace mittens. Queen Mary, accompanied by the Princess Royal, visited the school on March 13, saw the girls at work and took tea with the Governors, Staff and Sixth Form Girls. The relaxation of blackout meant that the New Building could be used in the evenings and the senior girls could go out on their bicycles to lectures, plays and concerts. The health of the girls was less good than usual with a serious epidemic of influenza, but staffing difficulties were eased with the appointment of Miss Venning, a trained Matron, as House Mistress. The school was adopted by Te Awamuto College in New Zealand, receiving some very generous food parcels, and in 1946, the girls were able to go abroad in an expedition to Holland.

The future of the school remained as uncertain as the future of the whole educational system and Miss Walpole felt that, after all the strains of war, both she and the school needed a change. In July, 1947, she informed the Governors that she had been appointed Head Mistress of Wycombe Abbey School and tendered her resignation from 31 December. She had been at the school for thirteen years and had carried it through the difficult war years with remarkable care and efficiency.

CHAPTER VI

The Road to Independence.

In the years following the Second World War, most schools were faced with a number of serious problems. Many had been damaged by bombing, almost all were old and dilapidated. The birthrate had risen significantly and there was a serious shortage of teachers. Even if, as at the Red Maids', the buildings were still intact and the pupils had not been evacuated, there were shortages of every kind, especially of books and even, in some areas, of pens and pencils. Materials were still very scarce and only the most essential repairs and redecorations could be carried out. Staff were tired after years of danger, worry, extra responsibility and fewer holidays. Many women, having stayed loyally throughout the war, wished to leave, either to marry and start a family or to seek different and more responsible work elsewhere. Few young teachers were prepared to accept the discomforts and demands of working in a boarding school and the new intakes of pupils were not only less well trained after the interruptions of the war years, but many were less stable and less able to concentrate on their work.¹

At Red Maids', some of these problems had been foreseen and stocks of goods purchased in 1939 but, by 1947, the school faced serious problems and shortages. War damage in the City had decreased the income of the Trust as prices rose rapidly. One result was that the number of Foundation Boarders was cut from eighty to seventy and ten fee-paying boarders were admitted, mostly girls sponsored by Local Education Authorities, as in special need of boarding education. The number of day-girls was also increased, so that already in 1947, Miss Walpole had discussed with a visiting Inspector the possibility of adapting the Stable Block to provide a dining room, a cloakroom, a science laboratory and a music room. However, it was found that no government grant would be available and the Inspector suggested a direct appeal to the Minister, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, but the project was eventually shelved because of the high costs involved. Mealtimes continued to cause problems of space, with many day-girls staying for dinner, and girls who wished to study science must still go to one of the other Bristol Schools.

The new Head Mistress, Miss Hedley, took up her post in January, 1948, and almost immediately faced a series of Staff changes which were to continue for many years. In the summer of 1948, the Matron, Miss Whatsit, retired

after sixteen years in the School, and the death of Dr. Cookson, who had been the Medical Officer since 1931, brought Dr. Craig in his place. In 1949, Miss Humphreys retired, having served the school for twenty-five years. Early in 1949 also, Miss Stoker left to become a House Mistress at Wycombe Abbey and Miss Price followed her there in the summer. Miss Melhuish took up the post of Vice Principal at the Training College at Bath, returning to judge the House Drama Competition that year. In 1950, Miss Tribe, who was responsible mainly for Physical Education and games, also left, though she is now well known to the Red Maids as the Chairman of the Governors. Miss Worrall became the Senior Mistress and Miss Jago the day-girls' House Mistress.²

Miss Hedley was herself a classicist and 1950 saw the introduction of Greek as a sixth form course, with Roman History and a term of Greek dancing. There was some increase in the science teaching, the introduction of craft for the day-girls, the usual drama and music and the broadcasting of songs by the girls' choir. Perhaps more important was the change from the School Certificate to the G.C.E. which at first had a lower age limit. This was supposed to encourage pupils to miss 'O' level and go straight into the sixth form, taking their subjects at 'A' level. Many schools, including the Red Maids, kept their pupils a second year in an 'O' level form, which caused a number of problems at the time but eventually brought about the abolition of the age-limit. The sixth form was increasing in numbers but the majority of girls still left at sixteen to do secretarial work. Three or four each year went to University or Teacher Training College and the rest went to nursing or physiotherapy, librarianship or Domestic Science College.³

For the Governors, finance remained the over-riding problem. Inflation made everything expensive, teachers' salaries were substantially increased in 1951 and only thirty-two of the thirty-five fee-paying day-girl places were accepted. The Red Maids' fees were higher than most and, in the 1950s, there was nothing to justify this. Miss Hedley's Report for 1950-51 showed good sixth form results and 224 girls in the school, but it also records a corresponding need for an adequate hall and stage, another dining room, common rooms for the girls and improved accommodation for the Staff. She found that few young teachers wished to board, especially with the cramped and uncomfortable rooms, the lack of privacy, the heavy teaching load and the demanding duties, especially at weekends. She suggested that the quality of the Staff might be more important than residence and that another assistant Matron should be appointed to take over some of the duties, but the Governors felt that there was no money to carry out any of these reforms.



The Head Girl laying a wreath on the Founder's tomb in the crypt of St. Nicholas' Church

Miss Hedley had noticed 'a certain reluctance to shoulder responsibilities or exercise authority – a rather unexpected characteristic of Red Maids which we are trying to combat in various ways.' This was not confined to the Red Maids and was particularly marked among the girls in some mixed schools.⁴ The following year was one of 'unusual strain,' with a prevalence of a 'get what you can, give only what you must' attitude. The school was overcrowded, with a large number of seniors who felt they had outgrown the restrictions of school. There was too high a proportion of young and inexperienced Staff with overfull timetables and too many duties, who probably had little time for the preparation needed and who were without the experience to frame the new rules required for the changing situation. It was unfortunate also, that from this time the Head Mistress had to spend far too much time dealing with the problems caused by frequent changes of domestic staff.⁵

In May 1953, there was a full inspection of the school, the first since 1937. The Inspectors had many helpful suggestions to make. The teaching in the school was competent but not distinguished. The Staff had heavier than normal time-tables and the requirement of residence greatly limited the number and quality of applicants. The Staff accommodation was unsuitable, 'much below what one normally finds.' It was necessary to attract the best teachers and, especially, older women who would supply a refining influence in the school. It might be possible to acquire a house locally for the Staff.

There should be subject rooms for music, geography and science; a library for the juniors, and a much larger grant for the main library. A school of 200 needed as many books as a school of 500 and the annual Library grant, which had only recently been raised from £25 to £50, should be £70 or £100. Classroom equipment was out of date or lacking. There should be film projectors and other aids. Science was essential for many careers, biology alone was no longer adequate.

The children's health was good, but there was really a need for a second sick-room and a wash basin in the day-nursery. In the kitchen, they found no record of the quantities used and no accurate costing. Again, there was need for older and more experienced people in charge. The menus did not show a balanced diet, there was too much starch and insufficient protein. The main thing was to have something more substantial for the evening meal – a high-tea or supper.

The main trouble was 'that every suggestion of educational improvement is always met by the answer, "It would be nice, but we cannot afford it," and things are not considered as they ought to be.' It was not possible to

give the children sufficient variety. The Juniors, particularly, found that the time hung heavily, especially at weekends. The accounts showed a surplus of £3,000 and no debts. The Clerk, Mr. Towill, stressed the increase in expenses. They were only better off than in 1937 in that they had no debts. The Inspectors returned to the 1929 and 1937 suggestion that a two-form entry school would solve most of their problems. The extra fees would finance the necessary changes. They would need a new hall, three new classrooms and a science laboratory but the Stable Block might provide some of the extra accommodation.⁶

Most of the girls, who had no other secondary school experience with which to compare it, enjoyed their schooldays. 'I don't think that, as children, we noticed whether the buildings were dilapidated, although we were aware that we needed more facilities. We had no common rooms, nowhere to call our own when we did have free-time or at weekends. We just went into the form-rooms or found corners, like the boot-room or the little music rooms in the New Building. However, we were kept so busy and our time was organized so that we did not have too much time to ourselves, not as juniors, anyway.' Much of the routine remained the same. 'I loved the orderly way we all filed in to meals, the Staff walked in and we sang the lovely Latin graces.' As always, Founder's Day brought, 'fires smoking in the Hall fireplace and flowers everywhere...and those bonnets!' There were still parties on Hallowe'en and bonfires on 5 November, a procession and hymns in the kitchen garden on Rogation Day, carols at Christmas and one year a competition to see which dormitory could make the best Christmas Tree from a window pole and pieces of greenery. Many girls enjoyed the walks in crocodile on wet days, the occasional half-holidays, and, 'as we got older, regular visits to the lovely old theatre in King Street.' 'I loved the singing, especially the madrigals, which we seemed to specialize in and which we recorded several times at the B.B.C.' When the girls left, they were still presented with Bibles and were allowed to choose their own leaving service.⁷ However, girls who had come from other secondary schools did notice the overcrowding and the shabby buildings and did regret the lack of science teaching and of a second modern language.

In the 1950s and 1960s, money was poured into the state secondary schools. There were new buildings, libraries, kitchens, dining rooms, laboratories and other specialist rooms and games facilities. Innumerable sets of books were provided, with film and film-strip projectors, radio, television, record-players, duplicators, games equipment, materials for art,

craft, needlework and domestic science, with posters, slides and classroom aids of all kinds, while the Emergency Training Scheme and the expansion of the Training Colleges and University Training Departments provided an increasing supply of teachers. At the same time, the standard of comfort in most of the girls' homes was very much improved so that it became difficult for the Independent and Direct Grant Schools to compete. As John Wakeford pointed out in his study of the English Public Boarding School at this time, these schools then made a virtue of necessity, building on a long tradition of austerity and claiming that the 'relative deprivation' in which their pupils lived was a necessary element in the building of character.

Wakeford found that the pupils, especially the juniors, were confined to the school grounds. They had no privacy, as all cubicles, cupboards and desks were open to search. There was little comfort, with no carpets or easy chairs and inadequate heating. Permission was needed for a host of minor activities and a teacher might question a girl at length or give an arbitrary refusal. Most important was the lack of choice, the fixed hours, the uniform, the companions in class and dormitory, the compulsory activities, the inspections and roll calls. There was no choice of food, the tuck cupboard was only open at fixed times and pocket money was held by the Form Mistress. No personal possessions were permitted and no make-up or jewellery. No toys or pin-ups were allowed in the dormitory. There was no choice of religious denomination and some schools restricted radio and television programmes and allowed only one daily newspaper. Most schools gave little opportunity for contact with the opposite sex. Wakeford concludes that, 'A personality formed by such a milieu is thereby to some extent unfitted for civilian life.'⁸ Not all these restrictions applied to the Red Maids' School and it is possible that Wakeford underestimates the suffocating atmosphere of homes where parents can be at least as demanding and at least as restrictive, especially towards their daughters. Even in the 1930s there were pin-ups in some of the cubicles at the Red Maids' School and a pot of flowers picked from the garden was never moved. Rights of possession and privacy were in general respected.

Another problem that Wakeford found in the schools he visited in the early 1960s was that about two-thirds of the Staff had no formal qualifications in teaching. At Eton, the supposition was that 'a man either can or cannot teach and no amount of theory can alter that fact. New Masters are given their classes and they must either sink or swim.' What happened to the boys in the meantime was apparently of no consequence! Teacher training and school practice, if it does nothing more, will at least weed out the totally incompetent.⁹



Denmark House, opened by the Duchess of Gloucester, 1975

At the Red Maids' School by 1953, some redecoration had been carried out, twenty-four desks and chairs had been ordered and a film screen for the new geography room. Alderman Williams' suggestion that they should take steps to implement the policy of two-stream entry was shelved and the Governors contented themselves with the comforting thought that 'the popularity of the school in Bristol is the surest evidence of the state of the school.' £50 was set aside for a Junior Library, more science apparatus was purchased, the conversion of the Stable Block was started and, as there had been no resignations of teaching staff that year, a sixth form Maths. course was begun. However, the future of the school as a residential establishment remained precarious. There were serious staffing problems, both teaching and domestic. Teaching staff should not be required to do duties of eight-fifteen in the morning until nine at night, as well as some Saturday and Sunday duties. There was a general dislike among teachers of the restrictions and duties of a residential post.

For many years, there was also considerable resentment among the Staff because of the deduction that was made from their salary for board and lodging, in spite of the quite onerous duties they performed and the poor quality of the accommodation provided. Certainly, in Local Authority boarding and 'camp' schools, not only were no deductions made from salary, but there was often an extra allowance for the extra responsibilities of a residential post. Miss Hedley summed up the year as one of 'stocktaking.' The school 'has moved forward and not survived as a historic curiosity, a storehouse of antiquated ideas.' But 'still we measure our standards too much by comparison with the Red Maids' School of fifty or even twenty years ago instead of by the standards of the contemporary world.'¹⁰

In 1956 it became necessary to raise fees again. The Ministry, concerned about the frequent increases, suggested that the building work at the school should be financed by means of a loan and not out of income and one of the Inspectors even suggested then the abolition of the boarding school, but neither idea was acceptable to the Governors. This left them with the problems of obtaining well-qualified staff, teaching and domestic; a rundown building, lacking much of the essential equipment; and a school so small and a curriculum so restricted that there could be no division into sets despite the wide ability range, and no choice of subjects below the Sixth Form. Many Bristol girls could not understand why they should be boarders, as the financial and other reasons for boarding had largely disappeared since the introduction of the welfare state and free secondary education. The Governors

decided to reduce the number of Foundation boarders from seventy to fifty by reducing the number of ex-primary foundationers, and to admit thirty fee-paying boarders, but at first, they found some difficulty in filling these fee-paying places.

In 1956, the Old Girls' Society celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a service at St. Nicholas' Church, a dinner at the Berkeley and a large garden party in the grounds of the school. In her letter in their *Report* that year, Miss Hedley described some of the changes which were taking place at the school. Nearly two-thirds of the girls now stayed into the Sixth Form for one or two years. There were expeditions, games, parties, music, competitions and plays, including one written by some of the girls, about John Whitson and called *Let us now praise famous men*. There had been changes in the uniform, with light-coloured stockings, grey skirts and red jerseys for the Sixth Form and the disappearance of the juniors' hair bands. There were non-resident teaching Staff and the small Staff bedrooms were no longer used, except as extra sick rooms. All the Staff bedrooms were to be enlarged and redecorated to provide comfortable bed-sitting rooms for the remaining resident Staff. Various trees had been removed or tidied up and young beech trees had been planted along the drive to replace the limes eventually. The hockey and cricket teams had done well and the girls who had been so troublesome in the fifth form were now 'pillars of society' in the Sixth.¹²

Some girls each year went on to the University and one girl won an Exhibition in Geography at Girton College, Cambridge. By 1960, a Red Maid had qualified as a doctor and several former pupils had won First Class Honours. In 1958, there was a First Class degree in Zoology at Bristol, a First in part I of the Geography Tripos at Cambridge and another old pupil, winning a First Class Honours Degree in History at London after three years of part-time study, headed the list and was awarded the Derby Studentship. In 1959, there was a First in Theology at Cambridge and a First in Latin at Bristol. Other girls still went on to Art College, domestic science, teacher training, nursing and physiotherapy, librarianship, secretarial training and even aeronautical engineering.

The Stable Block had been converted into 'two very attractive Classrooms and a coaching room,' and, in 1958, the school mounted its first course in advanced physics. Plans to renovate the main laboratory and turn the room next to it into a science lecture room at a total cost of £1,384, were drawn up in 1958 but this and the conversion of the Art Room into a laboratory were shelved, apparently for lack of funds.¹³

As a result of the comments of the Inspectors and on the advice of the Local Authority meals Supervisor, the girls' diet was substantially improved and is now rated – even by the girls – as 'quite good.'

THE DIET BOOK FOR 1957 TO 1966.

Breakfast

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| cereal or sometimes porridge | boiled egg |
| bread and butter | cold ham, etc. |
| either sardines, tomatoes or baked beans | |
| on toast | |
| or | poached haddock |
| | bacon and fried bread |
| | scrambled egg on toast |

Dinner

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| mutton hot-pot, butter beans, potatoes | lemon curd tart |
| roast lamb, cabbage, potatoes | raspberry blancmange, coconut |
| savory mince, carrots, potatoes | baked chocolate sponge |
| fried fish, beetroot, potatoes | apricot crumble, custard |
| roast beef, cabbage, potatoes | apple fool |
| pork sausages, baked beans, potatoes | fruit trifle |
| roast veal, peas, potatoes | fruit salad |
| brown stew, turnips, potatoes | stewed rhubarb, custard |
| eggs in cheese sauce, potatoes | treacle tart and custard |
| silverside of beef, cabbage, potatoes | rice pudding |

Evening Meal

Bread and butter and
 cottage pie, jam or honey
 luncheon meat, beetroot
 sardine spread, cakes
 sausages and fried potato
 cheese, apples, jam
 fish fingers
 cold meat, pickle
 corned beef, potatoes
 spaghetti, cheese
 veal, ham and egg pie
 herrings in tomato sauce
 cauliflower cheese

Supper

Milk and
 doughnuts
 queen cakes
 cheese sandwich
 short-bread and apples
 coconut slices
 buns
 jam tarts
 chocolate trifle
 custard tarts

apples every Sunday in addition¹⁴

These menus are taken from September 1957 and show a considerable improvement on earlier diet books, especially in the variety of the meals, and the evening meal was much more substantial than the bread, butter and jam of earlier years.

Successive governments were concerned about the number of secondary school pupils who left school without entering the Sixth Form. A report on early leaving in 1954 showed the close correlation of this with the father's occupation; 43.7% of Sixth Form pupils were the children of professional and managerial workers; 12% the children of clerical staff; 37% the children of skilled manual workers; 5.8% of semiskilled and only 1.5% of unskilled workers. A boarding school, such as the Red Maids' might be of particular advantage to a clever girl from a poor home in preventing the 'widespread changing of places between eleven and eighteen,' which the Report attributed to the influence of the home. A survey in 1965 found that the majority of girls in Direct Grant Schools were going on to further training but only a third of those in maintained Grammar Schools did so. This argues greater success in getting the girls through the 'fall-off' period at fifteen and sixteen when many girls become weary of school, its discipline and its increasing work-load. The Crowther Report of 1959 again stressed the importance of Sixth Form work, advocating a programme to ensure that, by 1980, half the boys and girls in the country would stay in full-time education to the age of eighteen, noting the great waste of talent in early leaving, since they felt that 'the ladder of further education' with its emphasis on evening classes, was 'at present too steep for those who are attempting to climb it.' They deplored the overloaded Fifth-form time-table and the extreme specialisation of many Sixth Forms. The Red Maids' School had, from time to time, been able to mount a general Sixth Form course which was of great benefit to many girls, giving them the experience of responsibility in the school, of planning their own work and of considering, in a more mature environment and free from the pressure of examinations, the type of career they wished to follow.¹⁵

The accounts for 1958–59 showed a loss over the year of £772, but the endowment property had an estimated market value of £300,000. The Trustees kept back 20% of income each year for repairs to property and that fund had reached £15,000, though it was said that more would be needed for the complete modernization and rebuilding of some of the properties, after which the income from rents and leases would be much higher. In the meantime, essential repairs at the school were shelved from year to year and necessary equipment was not provided. Fees rose almost annually until the

governors themselves were forced to ask whether the boarding school could continue. In January, 1960, the Ministry of Education, in reply to a letter from the governors, pointed out that the fees of the Red Maids' School were 'the highest but one for a girls' Direct Grant School, and for various reasons its affairs do not present a very satisfactory picture from our point of view.' The Chairman and the Clerk were invited to discuss the position at the Ministry in London.¹⁶

Early in 1960, Miss Hedley secured the appointment of Head Mistress of Worthing High School for Girls and tendered her resignation from the end of the summer term. There were sixty-three enquiries but only twenty-seven applications for the post. Great care was taken in studying confidential letters and references and the Inspectors were consulted before the final short list was drawn up. The listed candidates visited the school on 21 June and that evening attended an 'At Home' at the house of Mrs. Perkins. The next day they lunched with the Governors and the formal interviews took place in the afternoon. Each Governor was supplied with long lists of questions to be asked and points to remember. Finally, Miss Dakin, who was then a House Mistress at Wycombe Abbey, was appointed and it was decided to write to Miss Walpole to see if Miss Dakin could be released to take up her duties in the Autumn Term. This proved impossible at such short notice so Miss Humphreys agreed to return as Head Mistress for one term. At the age of sixty-six, she was a notable success.

Miss Dakin, arriving in January, 1961, began as she meant to go on. Hardly had the welcoming sherry glasses been cleared away and the departing Governors and Old Girls disappeared down the drive, than she and her Staff began compiling their lists. A hundred bath towels in the House colours and thirty-six white bath towels were needed at once. New gaberdines, winter dresses and tunics, blouses, berets and black woollen gloves were required urgently. Two beds must be replaced and thirty-six needed repair, forty-eight mattresses must be re-made and twenty-eight new pillows were required. All this work was ordered to be done in the Easter vacation. Eight new tables were required for the Geography room, more wash-basins should be fitted, the dormitories needed to be re-floored and the Staff Dining room, their work room, the two sick-rooms and four lavatories must be redecorated. The School should be a two-form entry school and more girls should be staying into the Sixth Form. This would mean new equipment for a physics laboratory, a new Assembly Hall and four more classrooms. The Chairman of the Governors agreed – but was afraid it was not immediately possible.

However, following the example of other schools and colleges, the school was let for the vacations, which provided some welcome additional income. Miss Dakin also drew up a new list of supervisory duties which she felt that all the Staff, resident or non-resident, full or part-time, should share.¹⁷

That summer, Mrs. Smith retired. She had taught Art and Craft at the school for thirty-one years and was the last of the Staff to have been appointed by Miss Webb. Generations of Red Maids will remember her as a gentle, cheerful person who was never cross with even the most ham-fisted wielder of pencil or paintbrush. The girls enjoyed the usual music, games and drama. Red Maids were chosen for the county teams in netball and swimming and one took part in the West of England tennis championships. Fencing was introduced, the girls providing their own foils and making their own jackets. In 1963, one girl won the Gloucestershire Junior Ladies Championship, and there were matches against Sherborne, Millfield and Westonbirt Schools. A School Magazine was started in July, 1961, and still continues, with news of all the various interests and achievements of the girls and their own original stories, poems and illustrations. The elms which lined the boundary on the Westbury Road had become dangerous and were replaced by a double row of white horse chestnuts given by the Old Girls, which would have pleased Miss Webb who wept when some chestnuts had to be felled to permit the Lodge to be built. The cedars near the house were found to have been attacked by honey fungus and, later, the weeping ash in the centre of the field was removed to allow a new hard surface to be laid for an all-weather hockey pitch. No doubt the last of the wild flowers disappeared when the grass was sprayed with a selective weed-killer.¹⁸

In 1964, Miss Dakin made some minor changes in the rules. Radios and record-players were allowed but books, magazines and records brought back should have the approval of the Head Mistress. Parents no longer visited the school on two Saturdays each term but girls could be taken out by their parents on two Sundays a term and the parents of each Form in turn were invited to meet the Staff at evening coffee. Parents could claim exemption from attendance at Prayers or Religious Education lessons. Miss Dakin had arranged with the Bishop of Bristol that the girls should go to St. Peter's, Henleaze, instead of to St. Alban's and that the Vicar of St. Peter's should take the Confirmation classes. The Red Maids received a warm welcome there, reading the Lesson at Matins once a month, helping to decorate the Church for Harvest Festival and joining the Youth Club. As a result of a discussion there, they were challenged to prepare their own service.

This they did, including music and songs, classical and modern dance and challenging the congregation to examine the basis of their own faith. This service was repeated by request at Westbury Church and then on the B.B.C. World Service radio on 17 December, 1968.¹⁹

Greater responsibility was given to the prefects and senior girls, who took over some of the duties previously performed by the Mistress of the day. There were to be regular meetings at which they were consulted about events, discipline and other school matters, so that the school might be increasingly self-governing. Staff were encouraged to attend courses to improve their qualifications and 'modern maths' was introduced into the school, with physics on the tutorial afternoon for anyone who wanted it. Girls were encouraged to go on field courses and to attend lectures, theatres, concerts and exhibitions. Miss Dakin tried to arouse the spirit of adventure at the time when most grammar schools were discovering the value of 'out of school activities.' In 1963, one girl went on to one of the new Colleges of Advanced Technology; two were doing Voluntary Service Overseas, one in Nigeria, the other in British Honduras; two others visited the U.S.A. and received visitors in return and, most years, Red Maids took part in the Bristol-Bordeaux exchange. In the School there were Red Maids from Hong Kong, Burma, Tanzania, Malawi, Bahrein, Kuwait and Brazil. School activities included an orchestra, Guides, a Scientific Society, a Literary Club, the Bristol Club and a Student Christian Movement group, in addition to which, each form still chose its own charity.²⁰

The Governors having decided at last that expansion was essential, the School Committee began to prepare the necessary plans. It would become a two-stream (60 pupils) entry school, with a Sixth Form of some seventy girls, a total of about 360 girls. The Staff would need to be increased by six and a laboratory technician. Five more classrooms would be needed and three coaching rooms, three more laboratories (one in the Art Room), a new Art Room and an Assembly Hall for about 400. Stage I would be the additional classrooms between the gym and the New Building (henceforth to be called the 300 Building) as well as various minor improvements. Stage II would be the new Assembly Hall, possibly in the walled garden and with a stage large enough to be used as a temporary Art Room. The existing Art Room would become a Chemistry Laboratory. Fund raising proved difficult and in the event, there were several changes in the scheme. The Art Room was moved to one of the upper dormitories and two Terrapin temporary buildings provided extra classroom accommodation.²¹

Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school again in March 1963. They were interested in the changes since their last visit. The number of orphan applicants had dropped sharply and a rising standard of living had made the benefits of a boarding education less desirable to Bristol parents who could send their children to the Red Maids' School or other comparable schools as day-girls. However, demand for boarding education generally had increased among parents whose work lay overseas or who were subject to frequent changes of posting or for girls from broken homes. The endowment was providing a little more than a fifth of the total income, the rest being almost equally divided between grant and fees. They noted also that the Governors had spent £10,000 in improvements since their last visit. There was much praise for the Head Mistress and her Staff and the way in which she tackled 'the really formidable difficulties which are involved in running the school.' They spoke of her 'Unflappability,' her 'very shrewd assessment of the school's needs and her practical ability in grappling with them.' The assistant Staff were an older and more stable group than in 1953. Of twenty full-time mistresses, half had been in the school for five years or more, about eight for ten years or more and more than a third were over fifty. This gave great strength and stability to the school. The Inspectors welcomed the appointment of a resident teaching Housemistress and three matrons, and the dropping of many of the irksome residential duties. The reduction in the number of resident domestic and teaching Staff had enabled the Governors to provide those who remained with comfortable bed-sitting rooms instead of the sparsely furnished cubicles formerly occupied by some of the Staff.

Except for the limitations still remaining in space and equipment, especially for science teaching, the Inspectors were in general pleased with the standard of work. The girls were 'so friendly' and had welcomed the visitors with conversation over lunch and coffee. They were so proud of their uniform and the school traditions and the Inspectors were glad to see the day-girls included in this flourishing corporate life. It was important to encourage these girls to participate in their own education, to introduce them to ideas and get them to discuss them and then the work of the school, from being good, would become distinguished.

They found some improvement in boarding conditions, the food was better, though there was still no costing system in the kitchen. They had the impression that life was less enclosed and there were more exeat for the seniors. However, more space was needed for common rooms, where girls could organize their own activities and the Inspectors, while approving 'light

household duties', such as the girls might have to do at home, still felt that some of the 'offices' were too onerous and that more adult supervision was needed in the interests of cleanliness and hygiene. More needed to be done to improve the dormitories and bathrooms where the floors had still not been renewed; one wall of the Old Building was very damp; the standard of decoration everywhere was depressing; the heating system was not adequate and the dormitory temperature was only 46 degrees.

The work of the school in music and drama won much praise but domestic science was 'a Cinderella subject,' and 'of the five sewing machines in the school, only one was less than fifty years old.' At their meeting with the Governors, the Inspectors made their opinion of the state of the school abundantly clear. They had found 'overcrowding, underheating, shabby surroundings and insufficient domestic help.' It was 'wearying for the Head and the Staff to be always contriving and making do.' 'You have here a really good school. You have able, delightful girls, a devoted Staff and an outstandingly capable Head Mistress. They are doing very good work, but they are doing it under really frustrating and austere conditions. I cannot believe that it is wholesome or educative for girls to be brought up with quite so much pinching.'²²

The Governors were very much concerned and determined to do the repairs to the school buildings at once and also to carry out the programme of expansion. Details of the proposed scheme were sent to the Department of Education and to Bristol's Chief Education Officer but were delayed while the Department considered the position of the Direct Grant Schools in the planned reorganization of Secondary Education. In her copy of the Inspectors' Report, Miss Dakin noted in the Autumn of 1968 that the plans for expansion had not even then been approved. Even the first Terrapin, available in February, 1965, could not be accepted without the approval of the Department, which did not arrive until April.²³ Numbers were still increasing so that the Assembly Hall was not large enough for prize-giving and Christmas and Easter services were held at St. Peter's. Everyone took science and the laboratories were overflowing. The Lower Sixth took up residence in the Library leaving the Upper Sixth crammed into the Study.²⁴

The Governors had discussed a Labour Party policy document on education as early as September, 1958. They noted that it was proposed to stop Local Education Authorities using places in Direct Grant Schools and that all schools would be either State schools or Independent. The examination at eleven would be abolished and all state schools would

become comprehensive. There would be no place in such a system for a small school so that it was likely that the Red Maids' School would have to become independent. However, it was pointed out that the scheme was not yet adopted as party policy, so the possible implications were not considered and no contingency plans were made.²⁵

By 1964, Somerset Education Committee had already decided not to take any more places in Direct Grant Schools and, on 13 March, 1964, the Chairman of the Governors attended a meeting at the Council House in Bristol, where it was made plain to the Direct Grant Schools that changes would be made as a result of the abolition of the 'eleven-plus' examination in Bristol. By the summer, Bristol Education Committee's plan, which proposed to take up no more places in the Direct Grant Schools, was widely publicized in the local newspapers and the following year saw the publication of the Department of Education and Science Circular 10/65, *The Organization of Secondary Education*. Published on 12 July, 1965, it outlined the forms of comprehensive education which the Secretary of State was prepared to consider as a means to the elimination of selection at eleven. In paragraph thirty-nine it was suggested that Direct Grant Schools should consult their Local Education Authorities to see what part they might play in the new system. However, the Bristol Direct Grant Schools found that they were already excluded from the local scheme which envisaged six-form entry, eleven to eighteen, mixed comprehensives, each with its own neighbourhood catchment area. No smaller schools or Sixth Form Colleges were contemplated, nor were there to be any boarding schools, mixed or single sex. The Bristol Direct Grant Schools must choose between independence and closure.²⁶

The Red Maids' Staff were by no means the only teachers who confessed to feelings of insecurity in those years. Some were in a particularly difficult position in that they had no contracts of employment and others had no formal teaching qualification. A long series of meetings with the Governors gave them clear contractual rights and settled many matters of dispute in a satisfactory manner. These included duties, payments for residence and a grant of half the cost when Staff went on courses which would benefit the school, which many of them were beginning to do. Modern teaching methods were introduced, not only in maths and science, but also in Religious Education, geography, history and languages.²⁷

In the meantime, the School Committee was not only pressing on with the redecoration of every corner of the school, but setting up a Middle School Library in the crush hall of the 300 Building, considering the provision of

common rooms, lavatories and showers, obtaining details of electric sewing machines and other classroom equipment of all kinds and seeking advice from the Local Authority Meals Department on the organization of the kitchen. Radio and television began to be used a great deal, especially to provide a broad general course for the Sixth Form and the new tape-recorders proved to be invaluable. By the spring of 1966, the governors' cash problem was serious. Some generous donations were made and the Old Girls, now called 'The Red Maids' Society,' gave £500 towards equipping the new science laboratory. A new organization was also set up called 'The Friends of the Red Maids' School' to help the school in any way they could. There was an annual summer fête and other fund-raising activities and the 'Friends' could also help in practical ways, such as accompanying parties of girls to concerts or the theatre, providing stewards at dances and even a fathers' carpentry group in the cellar. The two societies have made a major contribution to the many improvements in the school during the last ten or fifteen years, paying for tennis courts, a mini-bus, laboratory equipment, computers and the seating in the new hall and many other things. Governors also contributed and the lady governors especially worked very hard to carry out the various improvements which were needed.

The new Scheme allowed for day-girl Foundationers, so that, by 1967, there were thirteen orphan boarders, twenty-seven ex-primary boarders and fifty-eight fee-paying boarders, a total of ninety-eight, but there were also ten Foundation day-girls, four of whom were orphans and six ex-primary. Miss Dakin stressed the continuing need for boarding places, not only for girls whose parents were overseas or whose work involved frequent moves, but for children of one-parent families and others who might be in need of special care. Since almost all the teaching accommodation was on the ground floor, the school was particularly suitable for handicapped children and, in more recent years Local Authority Social Service departments have taken places at the school for handicapped girls who could benefit from the education provided.

In eight years, numbers rose from 200 to 300 and, with numbers in the Sixth Form over seventy, the Upper Sixth were moved to St. Monica's Home where they had their own study-bedrooms, baths and showers, common room and rooms for a House Mistress. At eighteen, these girls now had adult status and boarding school restrictions were not appropriate. They were allowed to wear their own clothes in the evenings and had more freedom to go out. This annexe was known as Whitson's House.²⁸

The need now was for self help, but for most girls' schools full independence seemed impossible. 'They have not the financial resources and, even today, parents are more loath to make financial sacrifices to educate their daughters than their sons,' wrote the Chairman of Governing Bodies of Girls' Schools' Association. It was a question of the need for boarding education and the possibility of erecting new buildings to attract numbers of boarders and day-girls and Staff of sufficient ability. The schools must use their special assets, places for the handicapped, entry at fourth form or sixth form levels, cooperation with the Universities and with the local community so that girls were free to the join Church clubs or Guides or to do social work there. Particularly, the schools must overcome the 'fifteen to sixteen fall-off period' and encourage large sixth forms. Attitudes must change. The Sixth Form must live in a separate house and should not be too much bound by the prefect system. They should have greater freedom to go home and weekly boarding should be an option. They should be able to attend the cinema, theatre and concerts and have relationships with boys. With an alert Governing Body and an energetic and imaginative Head Mistress, with concern for parental choice, with flexibility, good management and a ruthless pruning of inessential routines, 'There is no necessity to give way about independence.'²⁹

Slowly, between 1965 and the Education Act of 1976, the Schools prepared for change. One of the first needs was organization and publicity and, by means of *The Governing Bodies' Association* for the boys' schools, *The Governing Bodies of Girls' Schools' Association*, *The Direct Grant Joint Committee* and the *Independent Schools Information Service* they were able to prepare petitions for government and publicity for the news media, both locally and nationally. In much of this, Miss Dakin and the Red Maids' Governors played an important part. Miss Dakin was on the Executive of the *Association of Head Mistresses* and later became the last President of the *Association of Heads of Girls' Boarding Schools* and later Founder President of the *Girls' Schools Association*. She was Chairman of the *Independent and Direct Grant Schools Information Service*, President of the *Soroptimists' Club*, Chairman of the *Girl Guides' Training Committee* and a Magistrate. She became known and the school became known because she was its Head Mistress, and the experience and the knowledge of what was being done at other schools which she gained from these contacts was of inestimable value in the changes of the years from 1970 to 1980.

A full two-form entry was approved by the Secretary of State in 1970. A large house and grounds were then purchased in Grange Court Road, near

the school which provided a boarding house for eighteen juniors and two Staff and also a residence for the Head Mistress. This became known as Burnett House. In July 1973, plans of the proposed building in the walled garden were approved. It was to include a well-equipped Hall, three classrooms, five music rooms and boarding accommodation for about forty girls of the fifth and Lower Sixth Forms in individual cubicles. There would also be a common room with a coffee bar, a large changing room with showers, and flats for a House Mistress and Matron. These buildings were opened on Wednesday, 8 October, 1975, by the Duchess of Gloucester who delighted the girls by arriving in the grounds in a helicopter of the Royal Flight. The complex was called 'Denmark House,' partly as a gesture to her own homeland and partly in memory of the old school in Denmark Street. Miss Dakin, in her annual report, noted that there were by then 400 Red Maids, of whom fifty were Foundationers. 'Other Red Maids come from every part of the British Isles and some from Asia, Africa and the Middle East.' Education for girls had developed beyond the Founder's wildest dreams. There were Red Maids reading Archaeology, Biological Sciences, Social Administration, Quantity Surveying, Law, Medicine, Classics, Mathematics, Russian, Electrical engineering, Astro-Physics and many other subjects at Universities throughout the land, from Edinburgh to Exeter.³⁰

1975 brought the end of the lease of the Sixth Form house at St. Monica's and the need to provide similar accommodation for them in or near the school. Miss Dakin stressed the necessity of a separate building where they would continue to have the freedom they had enjoyed at St. Monica's. The financial situation was difficult and the Clerk noted the uncertainties of the future, but Miss Dakin pointed out that, at seventeen and eighteen, the girls were young adults rather than schoolgirls and, unless suitable accommodation was provided, they would leave to do their 'A' levels elsewhere. She suggested a self-contained extension at the back of Denmark House which would allow the independence and freedom of access enjoyed at St. Monica's. The Governors unanimously agreed that, 'these considerations outweighed the financial problems with which the school could be faced.' A plan for accommodation for twenty girls and a married House Mistress was drawn up, to be completed by the autumn term of 1976 as a matter of urgency. A building appeal that year produced £27,000 by November, 1976, in addition to £10,000 received from Gardenhurst, an independent school which had closed, and donations were still coming in. The Lord Mayor of Bristol opened the building, called Whitson's House, on

Dedication Day, 1976. It contained study bedrooms for the Upper Sixth boarders, a common room, a kitchen and a flat for the House Mistress and her husband. The Lady Mayoress took this opportunity of inviting a group of Sixth Form girls to help her with her guests at her next 'At Home.'³¹

At their summer meeting on 27 June, 1965, the Governors began by reviewing the financial situation. Although there remained £50,000 to find, they could envisage being solvent in seven or eight years, which was better than expected. They congratulated Miss Dakin on her part in the campaign to save Direct Grant Schools and went on to consider the future. The Avon Authority had notified the Governors that there would be no place in the maintained system for the Direct Grant Schools. There were two options – to become Independent or to close down. A proposal to go independent was put to the vote and carried unanimously. The Head Mistress did not believe that standards would fall, but it would be possible to cater for the less academic, if necessary, by developing music, arts and crafts and home economics. The Chairman said that some form of fees remission was essential and the Clerk then described the proposed Scheme which the Charity Commissioners had approved in principle. Not less than 75% of the School's endowment income should be used for granting remission of fees to parents on a means test basis at levels to be fixed by the Governors. Priority would be given to orphans and girls of one-parent families within the Bristol city area. The interests of pre-1976 Foundationers would be safeguarded. The Scheme would allow remission of fees for boarders and day-girls and there would be no requirement that the girls should have attended Local Authority primary schools as previously. More money would become available for these assisted places as present free-place foundationers left. They were keen to maintain links with the Local Education Authorities and would expect that a small number of governors would still be appointed by the L.E.A. The Charity Commissioners considered this Scheme in keeping with the intentions of the Founder, to assist, as far as financial resources allowed, all who needed help.

The proposal 'that the Clerk to the Governors should apply for a new Scheme' was then formally approved by the Governors. The D.E.S. need not be informed until December, but it was considered essential to inform parents and teaching Staff at once and a circular letter was to be distributed with the end of term reports.³²

By 1978, the school held 418 girls, 140 boarders and 278 day-girls and by 1982 numbers had risen to 460 pupils, studying a wide variety of subjects. Many girls take English and Maths 'O' levels in the fourth year

and in the fifth form there are G.C.E. and C.S.E. examinations available. In 1977 the G.C.E. pass rate was 90% and in 1978, 94% – the best in Bristol. There is a very large Sixth Form and, in 1980, thirty girls went on to University or Polytechnic, (three of them to Oxbridge) and several others to Further Education and Teaching.

In 1981, the new extensions to the 300 Building were opened, including a large, well equipped Domestic Science room, a new and modern physics laboratory, a computer room and three new classrooms.

The Red Maids also take part in a great many other activities, with a wide choice of games, music and drama, often in company with other Bristol Schools. However, Community service is not forgotten and consists of something more than the occasional gift of money. Some of the older girls have worked in local hospitals, in schools for spastics and the mentally handicapped. Girls of all ages visit the old and the house-bound and have worked hard to prepare a local Abbeyfield House for habitation. The girls organize the collection of blankets for earthquake victims, of toys for Oxfam, of stamps and foil for guide dogs for the blind and mount all kinds of special efforts, such as sponsored walks and swims especially for Children's Homes and Hospitals.

In the Magazine of May, 1979, Miss Dakin recorded 'a very unexpected and generous gift of £100,000 by John James, the Bristol philanthropist,' which would enable the school 'to offer facilities to more gifted children who would like to come to our school but who cannot afford to do so.' In 1982, 'together with other independent schools in Bristol' the Red Maids received a second gift of £100,000 from Mr. John James, 'to be used for the benefit of poor children in Bristol who could not otherwise afford the fees.' Mr. James had agreed that part of the money might be used to fund a scholarship in memory of Mrs. Monica Britton who made a series of gifts to the School and left it a bequest of £5,000 from her estate. In 1981, Miss Dakin retired and her place was taken by Miss Enid Castle, formerly the Head Mistress of Gloucester High School.

As the School approaches its 350th anniversary in 1984 and remembers with gratitude its long history, may it also retain both the spirit of enterprise and high courage and the gentle care for the poor and weak which distinguished its worthy Founder.

CHAPTER VII

All Change

Miss Castle's first report to the school on Founder's Day 1982 (re-christened John Whitson's Day) made plain that she meant to keep alive the Founder's spirit. She opened with praise and gratitude for her predecessor:

No-one who has read the history of the school, walked around its present buildings or talked to former pupils can fail to be impressed by the achievements of those who have worked for Red Maids' in the past, but it is obvious that Miss Dakin's twenty-one years here were years of great progress and development. Under her leadership the school grew in size, improved in facilities and kept abreast of modern educational developments while retaining the friendly atmosphere and concern for the individual which are so much a part of it.

Miss Castle went on to point out that demand for places at Red Maids' remained high and that many new entrants whose need was real were granted assistance through either the government's or the school's own endowment schemes. This, she said '...means that the school can continue to include the less well-off and maintain the tradition begun by John Whitson himself. We are also particularly grateful to John James for his generosity in this connection.'

The report then gives a glimpse of the new Head's philosophy of education:

It is very apparent that, in choosing an independent school for their daughter, often at considerable personal sacrifice, parents expect above all else a sound academic education. This I believe we offer – I hesitate to say our results prove this, not because our results are anything but good, but because I do not feel that examination results are the only way of judging even the academic education of a school. Not everyone, as many of you know, is good at examinations. Breadth of curriculum and the attitude to work which are engendered are other important criteria...(Although)... examination results this year were generally pleasing...inevitably

some Red Maids are disappointed with their results. What counts then are the qualities of character shown in coping with that disappointment, the perseverance and determination required to try again and the ability to face realities in looking for alternative ways forward. Disappointment is hard to bear and I am certainly not advocating its infliction as deliberate policy, but it is not the end of the world and those who have faced it and overcome it often achieve more in the long run than those who have trodden easier paths.

Miss Castle concluded her report by declaring:

This school could not have survived had it not, while maintaining the best of its traditions, adapted to changing circumstances. Somehow, we must educate today's Red Maid to be able to cope with change. Her mind must be trained but flexible. She must face the fact that she will probably have not just one career but two or three, that she will certainly have to be re-trained perhaps more than once in her life, that she may have infinitely more leisure time which she needs to be able to put to profitable use. She must learn understanding and tolerance for those less fortunate than or different from herself and be prepared to share and co-operate with others. I hope that she will resist the pressure I can see may arise to reduce again the opportunities for women – not because I wish to push all into the same mould, but because I want for her the right and ability to choose her own way forward.

In 1982 The Red Maids' School was in a healthy financial position. Even though the last of the Direct Grant beneficiaries were due to leave in July, the school contained a record number of pupils and had not yet begun to experience the increasing unwillingness of parents to choose a boarding school education for their daughters. In spite of the Headmistress's reluctance to jubilate over academic success, the high pass-rate among the school's 'O' and 'A' level candidates was to be an important selling point in the increasing competition for Sixth Formers. The lure of the maintained sector's co-educational sixth forms and colleges was as powerful for the parents as it was for their daughters – and sons, and the availability of free 'A' level courses, with mixed classes posed a serious challenge to independent

schools. Some of the boys' schools, including Bristol Grammar School and Bristol Cathedral School, began offering places to sixteen-year-old girls and, as some parents who could afford it were persuaded that their daughters would benefit from a change of environment at that stage, those schools were soon able to select for themselves the most promising among competing candidates. The subsequent switch by Bristol Grammar School to full co-education in 1981 would soon remove it as a rival since the need to recruit girls from outside into their sixth form would disappear and because the idea of single sex schooling for eleven- to sixteen-year-olds continued to find favour in England.

The Red Maids' governors and the Headmistress were well aware, then, of these and other threats to their survival and of the importance of the ambitious programme of building and educational expansion set in train by Miss Dakin. The year 1982 saw no actual new buildings appearing but substantial alterations were carried out to the Main Building. In what was by no means the first change in their function, the two rooms to the left of the front door of the main building were turned into a spacious working area for the staff. The former staff dining room (or 'parlour') became the secretaries' office, with provision for the requisite technology. New quarters were also provided in the 'Maids' corridor' for the housemistress who had been appointed to provide a relaxed and home-like life for the boarders. The central heating was improved and a T.V. watching room made from the former staff study. By December 1982 planning permission had been obtained for a new house to be built in Grange Court Road in the grounds of Burnett House to serve as a residence for the Headmistress. Backed by co-operative governors, Miss Castle had plans for more ambitious expansion, the creation of a new library, funded from Mrs. Monica Britton's bequest of £5,000 and Miss Dakin's leaving gift of £4,000.

When Miss Dakin was rewarded in the New Year's Honours List with an O.B.E. she chose, to accompany her to the Palace, head girls Jane Bennett and Catherine Coton, wearing their traditional uniform. Retirement did not diminish her concern for girls' education and she continued her valuable work for I.S.I.S. (the Independent Schools' Information Service).

In 1982 Mrs. Anita Salt retired from the governing body after forty-four years of outstanding and warmly appreciated devotion to the school. During her period in office she had seen the quality and style of life at Red Maids' change beyond recognition. Quite apart from the improvement in academic standards there was simply more going on. There were clubs for philately,

bridge, needlework, science, art, bellringing and computers. Enthusiasts from the Economics department, having been placed second in the South Western heat of a competition, set up a Young Enterprise company. Opportunities abounded for sports, including squash and badminton, fencing, keep-fit and self-defence, swimming, volleyball and athletics. Drama and particularly music had increased their importance, for by now over one third of Red Maids were learning a musical instrument and had formed orchestras and smaller groups including a barber-shop quartet. Many of these activities led to Red Maids associating with boys from Colston's, Q.E.H. and Clifton College, and enormously greater freedom to come and go and receive visitors had been granted to senior girls.

An article in the 1982 school magazine reminds us of another salutary innovation of Miss Dakin's, which was the decision to make all these facilities of a well-equipped boarding school available to children with special needs. The article was by former Red Maid Tricia Kit, who had been disabled by rheumatoid arthritis from the age of three but was by now a fellow of the Chartered Insurance Institute, working at the Clerical Medical Insurance Company in Bristol.

In 1983, thirty-six out of the seventy-five new entrants were receiving financial assistance, sixteen of them from the school's endowment fund, the rest from government grants. One third of all pupils in the school were being helped. The number of girls on roll continued to rise and there was no lack of candidates at the entrance examination. Happily, at that time, The Red Maids' School Governors' connection with Bristol City Council, broken when the school had opted for independence, was renewed by the city's nomination to the governing body of Mrs. Paternoster. Avon County Council, however, declined to make the three appointments open to them and therefore one of the governors co-opted in their stead was Mrs. Margaret Stone, née Weymouth, a former Red Maid and now a Bristol Primary School Head Teacher.

Once again the public examination results proved even better and seventeen girls went on to degree courses. Extra-curricular success was achieved not only by the Young Enterprise Company who entered the only girls' team for a national contest and were placed third, but by the school as a whole for the one to raise the highest sum towards the restoration of the Theatre Royal, Bath. For that, the prize was to mount their own production, with a cast of seventy-five, of an original play with music called 'Bug-Eyed Loonery' written for them by the heads of the English and Music Departments.

At the same time, much thought was being given to preparations for the celebration of the three hundred and fifty years of Red Maids' continuous existence, nor was there any let-up in the programme of building and improvements. First, Melrose House (158–160 Westbury Road) opposite the end of the short drive, was bought and adapted for use as a boarding house for forty third- and fourth-year boarders, a housemistress and two assistant matrons, thus releasing Seabreake and Speedwell dormitories, the latter to become a library. Miss Dakin now added a further £5,000 to her gift to the library project and soon the space for an excellent library, with two hundred feet of shelving was contrived. This work was not completed until September 1984 but that, as well as unattractive alterations to make the Blue Landing conform to fire regulations, carried on for several months.

That year a new section seems to have been introduced in the school magazine. Named 'Points of View' it invited and received frank comments and it provides an amusing variant of the authorised version of school events. Over the years, grumbles recurred about the absence of classroom clocks and lesson bells to encourage good time keeping discipline among teachers; about uniform; about the unfair treatment of day girls; the omission of practical subjects from the curriculum and the infliction of too much prep. Boarders wanted more freedom and straight drama, less singing and church attendance. There were even those who thought sports facilities were poorer than those of other schools and one very young (anonymous) woman informed Miss Hampton in 1988 'I hope you will take note of my opinions and strive to spend the money made available to you wisely and to everyone's advantage.'

1984 was anniversary year and the committee chaired by Governor Mrs. Jean Pratten was responsible for a packed and successful week of celebrations. In the hot weather of the Summer Term came the 'magical' production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in the open air, a graceful reminder of the tercentenary's 'Masque of Oberon'. There was a special luncheon in the marquee for the entire school and another for the Old Girls, many of whom had travelled long distances for the occasion. There were fêtes and dances, concerts and barbecues, discos and filmshows. There was an archive exhibition, Red Maid figurines and mugs for sale and the first edition of this present book was published.

The celebrations culminated on Dedication Day in October 1984 in a visit by Princess Anne to open the new middle-school boarding house – renamed Princess House – and the new library, furnished by the Friends

of Red Maids' at a cost of £5,000. Her Royal Highness was welcomed by a trumpet fanfare and a choir singing 'Welcom Yole' by Benjamin Britten. She was a popular visitor and delighted everyone by her friendly and good-humoured interest. For half of the Autumn Term the middle school had been obliged to camp uncomfortably in the new house to which furniture had failed to be delivered. To everyone's relief the wardrobes and chests of drawers arrived before the Princess did and were therefore still tidy enough to satisfy her inspecting eye when she pulled one open.

Meanwhile the school continued amply to justify its existence. Public examination results were excellent and so were degree results of Red Maid graduates, six having obtained Firsts that year and one a Gold Medal for Nursing. Red Maids were being chosen to represent the County in sports. A debating society had been newly formed, the Young Enterprise company calling itself 'Whitson Ventures Ltd.' and being the only girls' team in the finals of a national competition, began selling shares and made 203% profit. Four Duke of Edinburgh Award winners went to St. James's Palace and received their gold awards in the presence of the Duke. As well as the usual foreign trips and exchanges, two unusual visits were arranged, one of these being to Israel and the other to Arctic Norway.

The sound of hammers, however, was never long to remain unheard and soon the now empty Seabreake dormitory was turned into two classrooms to replace those in the stable block, which in turn was destined to become a music school providing six practice rooms and a large choir and orchestra hall. Next for change was Burnett House, which the Trustees of the Municipal Charities had expected to sell once the Headmistress and the youngest boarders had been established in their new quarters. The governors and the Headmistress, however, had seen a brilliant opportunity to build something which would bring the school financial benefit as well as fulfilling a recognised need. They petitioned to be allowed to keep Burnett and to open there a Junior School for three classes of twenty day-girls aged eight, nine, and ten years old and gave as some of their reasons that:

- 1) There is evidence of a very strong demand for places at eight years old. This is confirmed by other comparable independent schools, all of which have a junior department.
- 2) It would be an added educational, social and economic asset to the school to have a Junior School whose main aim would be to pass well-grounded eleven-year-olds to the Senior School.



Princess Anne visits a Home Economics practical lesson



The Library

- 3) Several of the Senior School facilities could be used by the Juniors.
- 4) Parents with a girl in the Senior School would find it convenient...and school coaches already come from many parts of Bristol.

They hinted that although there were many more requests for development in store this was the only one which would produce additional income. The plan duly received assent and the Junior School, in the charge of Mrs. Rowcliffe and two assistants, was officially opened by Lady Wills on October 10th, 1986. What was to become of the young boarders so soon to be ejected from Burnett House? Now that almost none of the teaching staff was resident, the small bedrooms in the 'Blue Corridor' could be adapted for pupils' use and these were welcomed by children no longer required to trudge back and forth between distant buildings. The improvements carried inexorably on, and down in the 300 Building the erstwhile library was converted into a lecture theatre complete with a lock-up projection booth and equipment.

By 1985 the problem of filling all its boarding places was at last catching up with Red Maids'. Competition to enter as day-girls was almost three to one but parents were not keen to let their daughters board before the age of twelve or thirteen. Constant self-improvement and the generous provision of financial grants were understood to be necessary, backed up by advertising through the press, Open Days and organisations like I.S.I.S.. That year the tuition fee was £1,530 and that for boarding £1,524, but the government and the school were each assisting ninety-five girls.

In a year of bitter cold when snow covered pitches for most of the winter Tammy Miller played for the England under-eighteen hockey side against Holland; music and drama continued to flourish and parties to go abroad; boarders took an increasingly active part in the life of St. Peter's Church, Henleaze and were responsible for the morning service one Sunday.

In September 1984 the position of Deputy Head became permanent with the appointment of Mrs. Lacy, who had been Head of Chemistry for three years. In the interests of keeping everyone up-to-date, the in-service training which the staff increasingly attended began to provide them with skills in computers and electronics: and now there loomed the task of preparation for the G.C.S.E., due to replace 'O' levels in 1988. Teachers in general welcomed some change, but quailed somewhat at the additional burden of continuous internal assessment. Current examination results were excellent (85% pass at 'O' level and 86% at 'A' level) but what might the

future hold? It may be of interest here to include the (how scientific?) result of a Gallup poll in which the editors of the school magazine sounded out the opinions of their fellow Red Maids about academic subjects. The order of their preference was 1) Games, followed by 2) Art 3) Biology 4) History 5) Mathematics 6) Cookery 7) Physics 8) Chemistry 9) English 10) French. So much, it would seem, for the myth that girls prefer arts subjects, especially languages, and fear science and mathematics.

There were very few staff changes in 1985, but in February the school was plunged into grief by the death of Pam Ellery whose radiant personality and enthusiastic commitment to the school had commanded great affection and respect. She had been appointed as Head of History in September 1955 and had served twice as senior mistress and for some time as librarian.

Numbers on roll in 1986 rose yet again but although clever girls were clamouring for places, not enough of them wanted to be boarders. Among the various grants available for the ambitious but less affluent was the special John James Travel Award of £200 which helped the winner of an essay competition to go to Canada.

It was now thought to be time to appoint a separate Bursar to handle Red Maids' finances. He was allotted space in the Lodge cottage, but subsequently the Bursary was transferred to rooms in the Blue Corridor and is now finally established in the former Headmistress's suite in the Main Building. The latter projected move was alluded to in her speech on Whitson's Day, by the Chairman of the Governors when she spoke of their wish to improve the laboratories and also the staff's working accommodation before the start of G.C.S.E. The kind of teaching necessitated by the new examinations would inevitably entail the creation of huge amounts of worksheets, and Miss Castle had convinced Mrs. Chermside that the staff must be provided with plenty of help. The former central assembly hall having become the place where meals – including the new buffet-style lunch – were taken, it was possible to earmark a large section of it to become a resources centre, equipped with a photocopier, an offset litho machine and perhaps best of all a qualified technician to run them. What might have looked like extravagance proved to be an economy, for as time went on, more and more of the school's printing requirements were executed on the site.

Late in 1986 Miss Castle was appointed Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College and when she left Red Maids' School at the end of the Summer Term in 1987 it was difficult indeed to realise that she had accomplished so much in only five years. The Chairman of Governors, in her speech at

a farewell party, spoke of the close co-operation between them and told Miss Castle 'We were all delighted at how quick a grasp you got of the school and how soon you could see what it was that needed to be improved, whilst maintaining all that was best in the school; and so with unhurried pressure and allowing us to share in your ideas, you put forward plans to the governors for the education and well-being of girls...(and for) cherishing staff.' All Miss Castle's suggestions had been carried out.

That year's dramatic production was a farrago devised by two teachers and called 'The Elizabethans'. It involved a hundred pupils and staff. A jazz group had now been added to the Red Maids' musical scene and the school magazine reflects an atmosphere of liveliness and enjoyment with an energetic staff input. A note of discontent, though, in the school magazine was sounded by a junior boarder, who wanted to protest against the Sixth Formers who begrudged the time they had to spend escorting first- and second-year girls on the fortnightly shopping sprees which were now permitted in Westbury village. Their minds were accused of impatience.

Miss Susan Hampton took office as Headmistress at Red Maids' in September 1987. She had the benefit of experience in both the private and the maintained sectors of education in her previous posts as Senior Mistress and teacher of mathematics at Redland High School and Deputy Headteacher at Kingsfield School, Kingswood, Bristol.

Her first months were complicated by difficulties in the Bursar's department, including the illness and eventual retirement of the Bursar, not to be replaced before January 1988. Fees were £1,950 per annum plus £2,016 for boarding; the cost for a child in the Junior school was £1,230 per annum. Places at Red Maids' continued to be sought by the ablest candidates. Four hundred and seventy-nine girls were now on roll, including 95% of the Junior School top class who had successfully competed. One hundred and nine were in the Sixth Form; about one third of all Red Maids were receiving some form of assistance, mostly through the Government's Assisted Places Scheme.

In her first Whitson's Day report, delivered barely two months after her installation, Miss Hampton described public examination results that were the best ever, with an overall pass-rate of 95% at Advanced level and of 92% at 'O' level. At 'A' level forty-nine girls had taken examinations in seventeen subjects and 48% of the passes were at grades A and B. The Headmistress claimed that these results were 'a perfect example of the recently published national statistics showing that girls and boys perform better at both 'O' and

'A' level in single-sex schools. For the academically ambitious girl a move to a co-educational sixth form could be a disaster – she is much more likely to gain higher 'A' level grades by remaining at a girls' school.' If to some ears, that statement has an old-fashioned ring, let them be comforted by the next one:

One area within the proposed curriculum which we are seriously considering and are anxious to introduce is Technology, and a purpose-built workshop for this is to be part of the new extension. Technology has been defined as 'the purposeful use of man's knowledge and of materials, sources of energy and natural phenomena'. It is concerned with identifying and solving problems. It is neither Science nor Design but utilises knowledge and skills from both areas. A course in this subject aims to give pupils an understanding of the relationship between Technology and Society; a relationship so close and fundamental that it is of over-riding importance in determining the life-style of every one of us.

Careers counselling for seniors backed by day courses and work experience had for some time been considered normal in all schools and was especially important in encouraging girls to be ambitious in exploring ways of exploiting their increasingly numerous skills. Few Red Maids could have grown very senior before they were taken abroad on one of the proliferating courses, exchanges or visits; nor were nearby places left out: parties were escorted to Bath, Oxford, London and to local theatres, museums and exhibitions. Participation in public speaking events was encouraged.

That year (1987) three governors were appointed by Avon County Council and one by Bristol City Council. A change more immediately noticeable to Red Maids was the retirement of the Catering Manager, Mr. Bardsley, after long service to the school and his replacement by a company called 'Compass Catering'. The task of settling in new teams of catering and domestic staff fell upon the newly-arrived Headmistress, who had also to double as a bursar for a while. Nevertheless the school continued to run as nearly normally as possible.

The layout of the remaining dormitory had been changed and it now consisted of small two- or three-bedded areas. Sleeping in a real old-fashioned twenty-bed dormitory used to appeal to younger Red Maids but prospective parents were less impressed.



An Information Technology class in the Computer Room



The new Art Room

In 1986 through the generosity of the Friends of Red Maids' a pottery had been set up in the basement of Princess House. The laboratories used by lower forms had also recently been upgraded but the governors were aware of an urgent need for a multi-purpose Science Wing, which would provide another laboratory and an area for C.D.T. The philanthropist John James, when approached, let it be known that it was now no longer the turn of the schools but of the medical services to benefit from his generosity. While various ways were considered of raising money, plans were drawn up for the new building. The Junior School was proving so successful that it was decided to extend the age of entry to it downwards and to add another form. The necessary extension to the house 'would pay for itself out of increased income over several years'.

The John James Trust was still providing money for awards to young would-be travellers from Bristol schools, and this year one girl was helped by it to join a Red Maid excursion to Iceland, open to girls in the fifth and sixth forms.

In her Whitson's Day report for 1987 Mrs. Chermiside sadly reported the death of Miss Walpole and suggested that it was she who during her term of office from 1934–1947 had 'really started the programme of modernisation', and who had perforce borne the responsibility for seeing the school through the Second World War. The Chairman had her personal memories of the awesome lady who

...was Headmistress when, as Miss Tribe, I first joined the staff here at Red Maids' and she used to frighten me to death. I remember being reprimanded for riding my bicycle, wearing tennis shorts, on Sunday – Red Maids were not allowed to play games on a Sunday!

Miss Walpole's death was closely followed by that of Miss Newell Price, her lifelong friend and colleague, first at Red Maids' and later at Wycombe Abbey. Teaching them music as well as games, Miss Price had come to know well the Red Maids of her time. The association of former Red Maids raised £500 to provide prizes for history and music as a shared memorial to Miss Walpole and Miss Price.

The following extract from the school magazine of 1987–88 referred to the removal of the weeping ash, beloved by generations of Red Maids, in place of which another was planted in 1981, paid for from Monica Britton's bequest. The retiring Head of Science, Mrs. D. Clarke, wrote:

In 1979/80 on a wintry day, when I was teaching the sixth form, I almost had a riot on my hands. Workmen arrived and began, without any warning, to cut down the weeping ash tree, which was in the middle of what is now the all-weather hockey pitch. This was the tree under whose shade many outdoor lessons were taught, many confidences exchanged and troubles wept over, and my fifth form were all for a protest march to save their precious tree. We couldn't save it, but we do have some of the trunk in the department still and we did find out that the tree was 150 years old. Alongside it was a covered-in well, which no-one knew was there and which very few of us saw before it was filled in and covered by the hockey pitch. Perhaps it was there when the first Red Maids were living in the school house in the centre of Bristol. It was certainly more than 150 years old.

Although competition for entry to the school remained strong there were fewer boarders. Another worrying development, in view of the fact that 70% of boarders had fathers who were members of Her Majesty's forces serving abroad, was the change in the regulations concerning Service allowances, which the governors feared might adversely affect service families' ability to educate their children in the United Kingdom.

The hardworking Friends of Red Maids' had continued to provide for the school the sort of equipment which was not vital but very useful, such as extra computers, a potter's wheel, a spinning wheel and £1,000 worth of hymn books.

This was the year which brought the first results in the new G.C.S.E. examinations. The seventy-five candidates obtained an overall pass-rate of 95% with 48% of those being 'A' grades. The fifty-four 'A' level candidates produced a 92% pass-rate, with 47% of the grades being A or B. There were five successful Oxbridge candidates, twenty-nine pupils left to begin degree courses and ten took a year off before further academic study. It was generally agreed by staff and pupils that G.C.S.E. was an improvement on previous examinations but the school magazine, valuable as usual, provides a glimpse of the grass roots where the 'guinea pigs' were not altogether happy. The new examination system relied on 'coursework' – the continuous assessment of pupils' achievements over two years – and protesting voices claimed that teachers of all subjects were giving out assignments simultaneously and setting identical deadlines. This meant that pupils were snowed under

at certain times and felt unable to do justice to any subject. Better staff consultation seemed to be required. Another view of coursework expressed was that, instead of alleviating the candidate's dread of examinations, it increased it by 'dragging it out over two years'. There was the opinion that some syllabuses were too wide for students ever to get to grips with the subject. History was thought now to be more interesting than it had been; but one contributor expressed the worry that the new examinations, dependent as they made schools upon good teaching resources, would inevitably favour the best-financed ones.

Miss Hampton's report to the school on her second Whitson's Day as Headmistress showed her looking to the future:

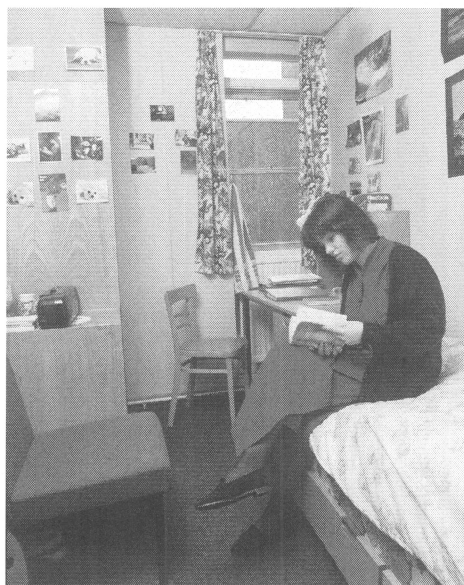
As 1992 approaches we are aware of the need to develop in young people a positive attitude towards Europe. I am satisfied that a European dimension in education is present at Red Maids', directly through the very good teaching of Modern Languages and indirectly through Economics, Geography and History and other related subject areas...

Plenty of opportunities existed, fortunately, for Red Maids to excel or just enjoy themselves outside the classroom. They did very well in Art: Martha Taylor's poster 'Age of Chivalry' was judged to be the local 'Winner of Winners' and was later displayed in the foyer of the Royal Academy in London and then in Bristol's City Art Gallery. Alice Roberts was the overall winner from fifty-four thousand entries in a competition to design a cover for the Radio Times celebrating 'Blue Peter's' thirtieth birthday; it appeared on the issue for December 10th. The same Red Maid, as a finalist in another contest earned an invitation to a Gala Luncheon at the Savoy Hotel in London. The Young Enterprise group in the sixth form with its 'Red Makes' was doing well and another group was formed. There were musical productions of 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' and of 'Oh, What a Lovely War!'. A Bristol branch was formed at Red Maids' of the Young Engineers' Society, to include other girls' schools in the area. It was the first such society in England and the Engineering Council gave it financial support for lectures, workshops and residential courses.

Unusual among the plentiful sporting opportunities offered to Red Maids was a watersports holiday in France.



Fourth-year boarders in Maryflowre dormitory, 1991



An Upper Sixth boarder
in her study-bedroom in
Whitson's House

The first three days were spent canoeing down the Ardèche River, camping each night, followed by four days of windsurfing, sailing and waterskiing on the Mediterranean. The enjoyment of this type of holiday was obvious, but of greater value was the increased confidence and self-awareness the girls gained from the various challenges that were presented to them. (Headmistress's report to the school.)

Service to others was always a very important element in the Red Maids' ethos and not only fundraising but practical acts of charitableness were always expected to become part of their normal way of life. Alongside all the needs and opportunities to spend money on their own improvement and enjoyment, Red Maids never ceased to raise large sums or to proffer practical help to those in need at home or abroad. Under a new system introduced by Miss Dakin, a senior Red Maid was annually elected as Almoner to help direct these operations.

No new building was added to the school in 1988, but to keep everyone in practice, some important and beneficial moves were carried out in the existing ones. In the interests of their greater comfort, security and discipline, the third- and fourth-year boarders were brought from Princess House back to the main building, changing places with first and second-year girls. A self-contained flat was made for a housemistress in the main building and a new telephone system installed throughout the school at a cost of £9,000. It was at this time, too, that the Bursary was established in what had once been the Headmistress's apartments.

It had been decided to go ahead with plans for the extension of the 300 Building. A three-storey wing would be conveniently linked to the original building and to its 1981 accretions, and would house a Craft, Design and Technology department on the ground floor and a laboratory on the first floor, with the second floor given over to Art, Pottery and Textiles. The present Art rooms were transformed into a mathematics department including two classrooms and a staff office.

Over at the Junior School, the cost of £135,000 for its projected two-storey extension was to be met in the end by fees from the increased number of pupils. Here it was proposed to put a general activities room on the ground floor, a classroom and cloakroom on the first floor with a smaller room in the roof-space. Work was to start in January 1989 for completion in September 1989, in time for the admission of twenty seven-year-olds. That part at least of the new schemes went according to plan and the

addition to the Junior School was ready well before October 15th, to be opened by Miss Castle, the prime mover in its existence.

Construction work on the 300 Building had not gone so smoothly: the contractors started late and were hampered by delays in the delivery of materials, resulting in the work becoming ten weeks behind schedule by November 1989, not to mention flooding and other nuisances to all those trying to carry on life as usual.

Although the total number of pupils on roll had once more risen, there had been a drop in the figure for boarders and sixth formers and three Whitson Bursaries of £300 each were set up to help fifth form pupils stay on to the Sixth Form.

Again the public examinations resulted in a high pass-rate. The Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate awarded to Tracy Liddiment their prize for the candidate who was judged to have achieved the best results in the Advanced Level Mathematics and Further Mathematics examinations.

The introduction of the National Curriculum was the next important issue confronting schools in the United Kingdom. Although it was not to be mandatory for Independent Schools, the Headmistress and Governors thought it desirable to meet the requirements, since this would be the yardstick by which Her Majesty's Inspectors would judge the success of schools. Change would be necessary, to a more cross-curricular approach to subjects and seniors and juniors would need to have more instruction in technology. The problem would be fitting everything into the timetable without lengthening the school day and teachers' hours.

One venture receiving the general co-operation of the staff was described by Miss Hampton:

With the increased importance of the spoken language in G.C.S.E. and the new 'A' level examinations, the French department wanted to offer the opportunity to follow a language-based course in France, rather than the traditional sight-seeing trip...

The 'Young Reporters' six-day course was followed by thirty-six pupils and four teachers who went to Le Touquet; after tape-recording interviews with the local inhabitants all day, they passed their evenings in studying their findings, in a classroom provided by the hotel.

Curiously, until this time piano lessons had not been available in school to day-girls, but the appointment of a full-time teacher of piano

now made this possible. This chanced to be the year when a former Red Maid telephoned the Headmistress and offered her a gift for the school. Miss Hampton's choice was a baby grand piano.

Another successful innovation was the Sixth Form Ball, organised by the students themselves and attended by over two hundred at the Victoria Rooms.

In March 1989, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital had celebrated the four-hundredth anniversary of its founding and twenty Red Maids paraded in cloaks and bonnets, together with the boys of Q.E.H., the Lord Mayor in her horse-drawn carriage and the band of Christ's Hospital.

Also in March, the Friends of Red Maids' School marked their twenty-fifth anniversary with a party attended by Miss Dakin and Miss Castle, when a new Ford Transit minibus was presented to the school.

In 1990 the proportion of day-girls to boarders rose again but more fifth-formers stayed on, possibly owing partly to the new scheme for offering awards. In competing for one of these, pupils were required to write an essay describing 'how they thought they had benefitted from being at Red Maids' School, their career ambitions and reasons for staying there for 'A' levels.'

In spite of the widespread fear that G.C.S.E. would cause a degeneration in standards of scholarship the 'A' level results of the Red Maids' 'G.C.S.E. guinea-pigs' beat the school's former records, with a 95% overall pass-rate, 51% of them with grades A or B. Forty-one planned to read for degrees and one student obtained one of six coveted sponsorships awarded by British Aerospace Systems. However, a new anxiety which began to exercise the governors was the decline in the number of graduates seeking to enter the teaching profession, at any rate within the independent sector.

In September a start was made on implementing the National Curriculum with the first three year-groups. Technology was introduced and English, Mathematics and Science were being taught according to published guidelines, although worries were felt about the national testing programme and regrets that the whole undertaking was becoming so bureaucratic. Meanwhile debate about 'A' level dragged on.

By the Autumn, Red Maids' was rejoicing in the possession of new facilities for the teaching of practical subjects: these together with the new suite of mathematics rooms, created out of the former Art rooms, which had started life as Discoverer dormitory, were opened in October 1990 by the Right Hon. the Baroness Young, Chairman of the Governing Bodies of Girls' Schools Association.



A general view of the '300' Building and Main Building, 1991



The official opening of the Design/Science/Technology Extension, October 1990. Left to right – Mrs. Chermiside, Rhian Moffett, Baroness Young, Jenny Akehurst, Miss Hampton.

For the Chairman of Governors 'the most exciting innovation was the Technology Workshop... Already Red Maids in years one, two and three are gaining confidence as they use drills, saws and vises. Design Technology is providing girls with the opportunities to design, make, test and evaluate in given or chosen contexts; which introduces them to real problems that require real solutions.' Former generations of pupils, represented by the Red Maids' Society, wishing to be associated with this modern initiative, contributed £500 towards the purchase of a handsome cabinet for the secure storage of the tools. In Miss Hedley's memory, they also endowed a prize for Technology.

Naturally the school was very grateful to their wise and far-sighted Governors and of course the Headmistress expressed their indebtedness in her Whitson Day report. But she was a Headmistress cast in the same mould as her predecessors. She went on:

However, the governors know that I am not easily satisfied and already I have presented the Planning Committee with rather a lengthy set of suggestions for the future.

How was it possible that the Headmistress of a school whose fees were relatively so low could contemplate proffering such suggestions? It must be remembered that although Red Maids' does depend for its income upon its revenue from fees and government assistance, yet it can still draw upon the income from John Whitson's bequest of his manor and estate at Burnett. Since 1836 (see p. 82) that income has been managed on the school's behalf by the Bristol Municipal Charities Trust. Burnett Manor and almost all the estate land has been sold, over the years, and the money re-invested, some in office and commercial property in Bristol and the remainder in the money market and Stock Exchange. This has enabled the Governors of Red Maids' to borrow capital occasionally to complete costly projects without having recourse to public appeals.

The death was reported of Miss Anna M. Hedley, who had been Headmistress from 1948-60. Mrs. Chermside spoke of her as being 'the person who was responsible for relaxing some of the very restrictive rules for the boarders, especially at weekends.'

Yet rules cannot help but restrict and every generation looks with astonishment at the others' privations and privileges. We who were Red Maids in the pre-independence era may read this chapter and wonder what

has become of the school we knew. Yet we need not fear. Ours is a long history and new Red Maids can maintain old traditions and invent new ones just as well as we who went before. Let the last word be with Charlotte Marman, a sixth former telling of her reception as a first former in 1982:

I was introduced to my 'Big Girl' (what a silly name, but not half so strange as 'struck ons' and 'struck offs') and other guardian angels designed to introduce you gently to school life and help you with your problems. My big girl WAS my biggest problem! The first weekend at school and what happens? The kind, considerate second- years decide to 'Johnnie' us. One by one we are marched into the air raid shelter and forced in pitch darkness to eat peeled grapes in toothpaste (John Whitson's eyeballs). Then, of course, we were expected to sing the Latin graces in gratitude for this delightful meal. A cold bath inevitably followed... I found Founder's Day exciting, so much so that while I was in St. Nicholas's Crypt, I wasn't watching what I was doing and scorched the Lord Mayor's gown with my taper.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| A.C.L. | Avon Central Library. |
| A.P.C. | <i>Acts of the Privy Council of England.</i> |
| B. & G.A.S. | <i>Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society.</i> |
| B.B.H.A. | <i>Bristol Branch of the Historical Association.</i> |
| B.L. | British Library. |
| B.M.C. | The Trustees of the Bristol Municipal Charities. |
| B.R.O. | Bristol Record Office. |
| BRO/BMC | Records before 1836 returned by B.M.C. to B.R.O. |
| B.R.S. | <i>Bristol Record Society.</i> |
| <i>Cal. Pat.</i> | <i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office.</i> |
| <i>Cal. S.P. Dom.</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series.</i> |
| P.R.O. | Public Record Office |
| /C | Chancery |
| /E | Exchequer |
| /HCA | High Court of Admiralty |
| /Req. | Court of Requests |
| Records at B.M.C. | BMC 1 Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees from 1836. |
| | RMS B-D Minutes of the Governors of the School, 1840–74. |
| | RMS i–xi Minutes of the Governors of the School, 1875–1977. |
| Miscellaneous Minute Book | |
| Emergency Minute Book | |
| Boxes of Newspaper Cuttings. | |
| Various other papers. | |

NOTES

Chapter I

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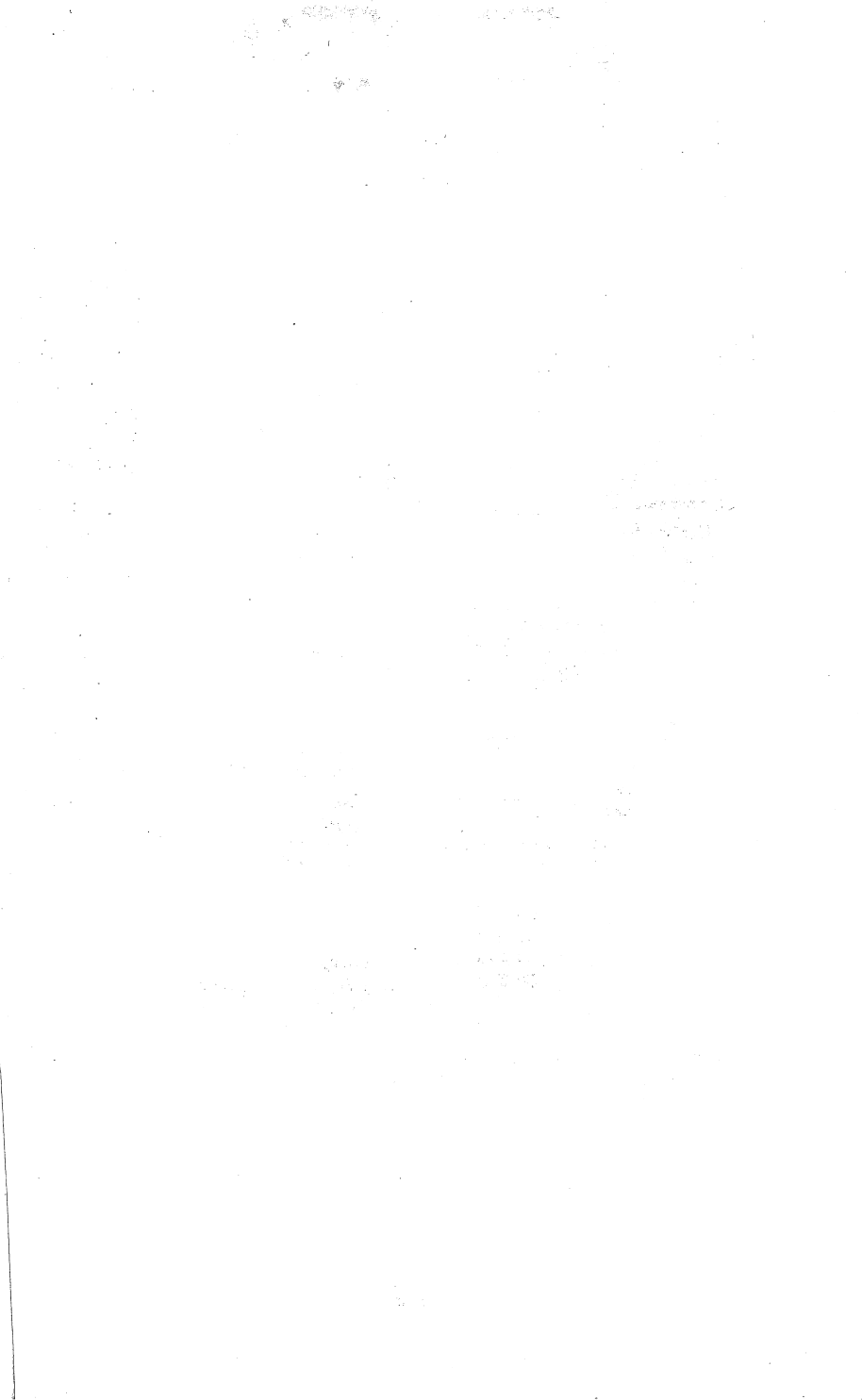
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DR. VANES (then Jean Durn) was a boarder at the Red Maids' School from 1934 to 1940.

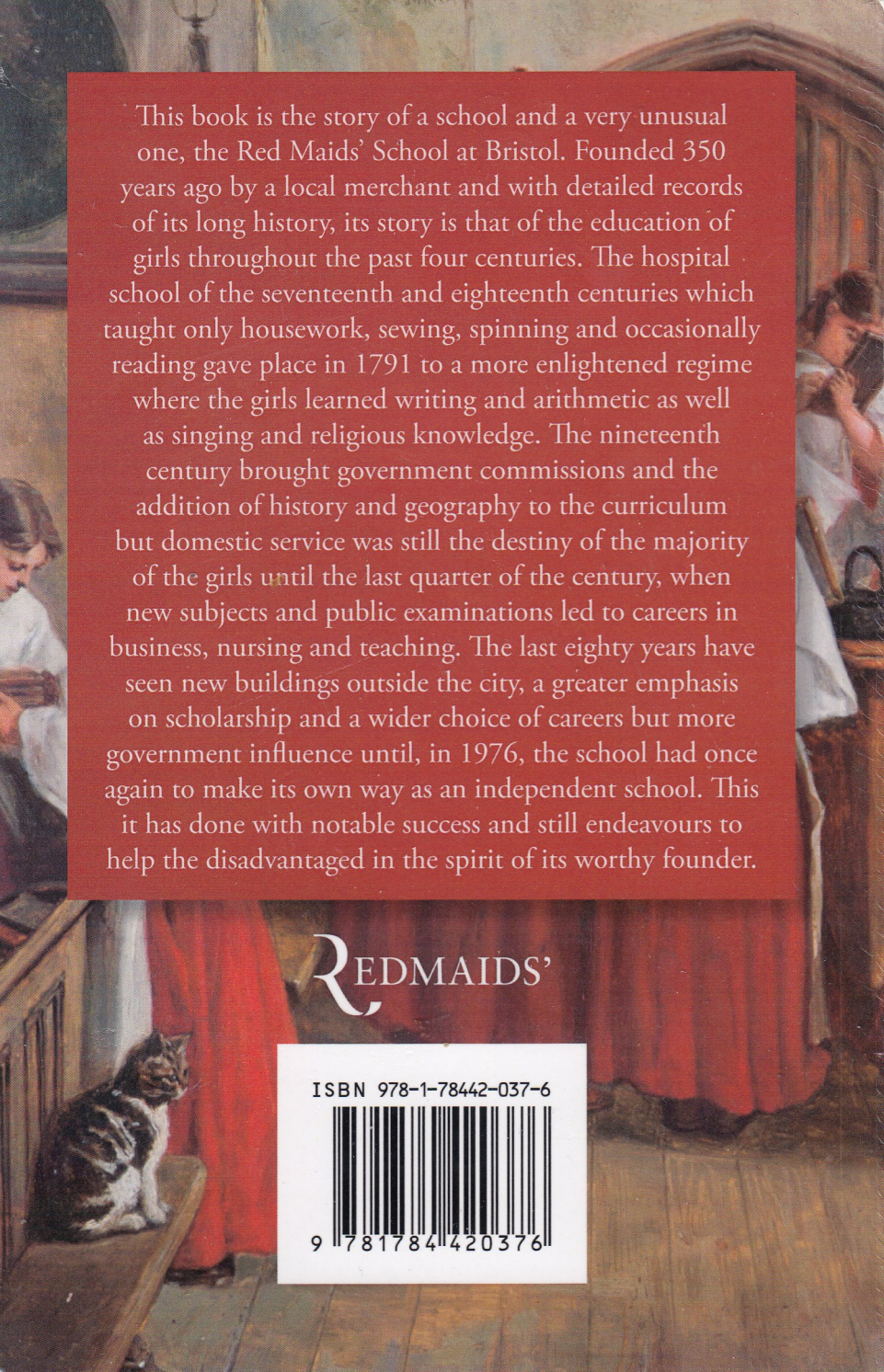
In 1948, after war work, she became a teacher in a Birmingham grammar school, moving to a London school in 1955 to study for a degree in her spare time. In 1958, she gained a First Class Honours Degree in History and went to live in Kent where she became Head of the History Department at Beckenham Girls' Grammar School. In 1967, she was appointed a Senior Lecturer in History at Furzedown College of Education.

MRS. ELISABETH COOK (then Willcox) followed her sister Lottie to Red Maids' and was a boarder from 1944 to 1952. With a degree in Modern Languages from Oxford, she worked as a teacher, first in Surrey, then, from 1974 – 78 at Bristol Grammar School for Boys. From 1978 – 85 she was Head of Modern Languages at Colston's Girls' School, Bristol.

PAINTING OF THE RED MAIDS

Eyre Crowe (book cover)

Two pictures of the Red Maids in the schoolroom were painted in the late nineteenth century by Eyre Crowe, an English domestic, historical and portrait painter, who was born in Chelsea in 1824. He spent most of his early life in Paris, returning to London in 1844. He became an Associate of the Royal Academy, exhibiting there regularly from 1848 to 1904.

The background of the book cover is a detailed oil painting of a school interior. On the left, a young girl in a white dress is seated, looking down at a book. On the right, another girl in a white dress is standing, also looking at a book. In the foreground, a small tabby cat sits on a wooden bench, looking towards the right. The room has wooden floors and a large red curtain in the background.

This book is the story of a school and a very unusual one, the Red Maids' School at Bristol. Founded 350 years ago by a local merchant and with detailed records of its long history, its story is that of the education of girls throughout the past four centuries. The hospital school of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which taught only housework, sewing, spinning and occasionally reading gave place in 1791 to a more enlightened regime where the girls learned writing and arithmetic as well as singing and religious knowledge. The nineteenth century brought government commissions and the addition of history and geography to the curriculum but domestic service was still the destiny of the majority of the girls until the last quarter of the century, when new subjects and public examinations led to careers in business, nursing and teaching. The last eighty years have seen new buildings outside the city, a greater emphasis on scholarship and a wider choice of careers but more government influence until, in 1976, the school had once again to make its own way as an independent school. This it has done with notable success and still endeavours to help the disadvantaged in the spirit of its worthy founder.

REDMAIDS'

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